



## **Utilizing GCM objective 1 to change public narratives on Migration in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic**

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A staggering 32% of the 258 million migrants currently living outside of their country of birth are under the age of 30. As the Major Group for Children and Youth, and with the majority of us being migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, we feel proud to have been participating in the regional reviews of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) to shape discussions on migration. We have also conducted youth-led consultations in specific countries which allowed us to bring concrete and evidence-based voices and concerns to the discourse around migration. As young people, we recognize the GCM as a significant opportunity to improve the governance of migration, to address the challenges associated with today's migration, and strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development.

A huge challenge we have noted through our engagement to help safeguard the rights of migrants is migration data gaps. For instance, IOM has revealed that about 43 per cent of countries and territories in Africa do not have age disaggregated data on migrants<sup>1</sup>. Many migrants across the world are undocumented. The narrative around migration is still negative in many communities and societies. Polarized perceptions related to immigration, and the phenomenon of 'fake news' have contributed to inaccurate and biased information on migration and migrants. Meanwhile, evidence-based narratives are woefully inadequate and seem not to resonate with audiences, while misinformation and myths have spread rapidly with many negative consequences.

How can we address misinformation about migrants and debunk 'fake news' on migration in the absence of accurate, reliable and timely data and information?

The first objective of the Global Compact of Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) obligates states to collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies. Governments are also called upon to ensure that this data fosters research, guides coherent and evidence-based policy-

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<sup>1</sup> IOM, Press Release, "Massive Data Gaps Leave Refugee, Migrant and Displaced Children in Danger and Without Access to Basic Services": <https://www.iom.int/news/massive-data-gaps-leave-refugee-migrant-and-displaced-children-danger-and-without-access-basic>

making and well-informed public discourse. This has become extremely necessary in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the lived realities of migrants all over the world.



The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the many issues that exist and continue to affect migrants, especially young migrants. In fact, the pandemic has heightened frictions between migrants and host communities in many countries.

On the other hand, the world has witnessed the massive contribution from young migrants in the fight against COVID-19 in several countries, with many migrants playing critical roles such as acting as frontline health workers. In fact, the pandemic has taught all of us that, given the right conditions, migrants greatly contribute to societies and economies, and this has been said over and over again. It should not have taken a global pandemic to realize this was the case but, now that we are here, there's a huge opportunity to really double our efforts by maximizing young migrants' contribution to help shape public narratives around migration.

It is worth reiterating that as much as migrants may have specific vulnerabilities, they also contribute enormously to the development of the communities they find themselves in. Hence, governments must take full responsibility to ensure a healthy public narrative on migration and migrants at all levels.

The [#ImmigrationMatters Campaign](#) in Canada is a perfect illustration of utilizing data to shape public narratives. This initiative uses compelling storytelling to demonstrate the benefits of immigration, especially at the local level, and this is complemented by facts, including information about how Canada's immigration system works and economic data showing the impact of immigration on communities.

In view of this, the GCM regional reviews and the highly anticipated first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) present a critical opportunity to deepen international migration discussions and evaluate what has been achieved so far. States ought to provide economic data and information on the positive

impact migrants have made, especially at the local level. Civil society and all stakeholders can also make the demands enshrined in GCM objective 1 a crucial part of all discussions at the upcoming IMRF. It is therefore critical for governments to make migrants' contributions central in their reports with concrete plans on how to harness the benefits of migration with innovative ideas. States must go beyond simply reporting on what has been done for migrants, and highlight as well what migrants have done for them.

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