

IMRF Round table 4

Preliminary Note (draft, 2 February 2022)



1. Introduction

Strengthening evidence-based policymaking for informed public discourse and enhancing international cooperation to reduce vulnerabilities and promote safe, orderly and regular migration are among the central aims of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). Accurate, reliable, and timely data that is disaggregated by sex, age, migration status, disability and other characteristics is vital for informed public debate and the formulation of evidence-based policies and programmes that are child-sensitive, gender-responsive, and human rights-centered. The lack or insufficient use of evidence, combined with misleading migration narratives, discrimination and xenophobia, contribute to policies and practices that make migration unsafe, disorderly and irregular. Discrimination, stigma and xenophobia can also have a corrosive effect on wider society, breaking down trust and hindering the inclusion of migrants.

Ensuring that policies and practices are evidence-based and aligned with relevant legal frameworks – for example to uphold the best interests of the child or to provide protection for victims of trafficking – are key to addressing and reducing vulnerabilities, including in responses to mixed movements.

Safe, orderly and regular migration requires informed and empowered migrants who are able to access information pertaining to their rights and obligations during all stages of migration. This can include information on fair recruitment, skills, qualifications, entry and exit requirements, living and working conditions, and access to services, among others.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on structural inequalities and exacerbated many of the challenges already faced by migrants in vulnerable situations. At the same time, the pandemic has shown how much societies depend on migrants, especially in sectors such as health, food, carework, and other essential services. The pandemic has also demonstrated that no State can address migration on its own, and has reinforced the importance of collective action and international cooperation.

2. Overview of progress

Objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies

Improving the availability and quality of disaggregated data, while safeguarding the right to privacy and data protection, is essential for evidence-based policymaking and programming, and for fostering an informed debate on migration. Reliable, timely and accessible data and evidence are needed to ensure

targeted interventions that meet the varied needs of migrants and their families. The lack of harmonisation and standardisation of data hinders a comprehensive assessment of migration patterns, and limits the potential policy space for effective migration governance and diaspora investment. In response to GCM Objective 1(a), (b) and (c), the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics¹ started work to revise the 1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration. The expert group is also tasked with developing a global programme on migration statistics. IOM, ILO, the regional commissions and UN DESA are implementing capacity development programmes on migration statistics and on harnessing the contribution of migration to development.² The International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) has advocated for a world migration survey to generate internationally comparative migration information. With a view to foster research, guide evidence-based policymaking and inform public discourse, IOM, OECD and UN DESA convened the International Forum for Migration Statistics in 2018 (Paris) and 2020 (Cairo). To shed light on the plight of migrant children, the International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC)³ is pooling technical resources and diverse expertise. Various UN entities are collaborating in monitoring SDG indicators related to migration.

During the regional reviews, countries indicated that COVID-19 has had a major impact on traditional forms of data collection on migrants and migration, in particular on population censuses, the main source for migration data worldwide, and household surveys. Moreover, disaggregation of migration data and indicators by sex, age, migratory status and other key characteristics remains a challenge for many countries. Further, limited progress has been made in documenting the contribution of migration to development in countries of destination and origin beyond the role of diasporas and remittances. The African Migration Observatory can play an important role in collecting migration information and coordinating migration issues between African countries.

Objective 3 - Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration

Accurate, accessible and transparent information at all stages during the migration process is key to providing predictability for all actors involved. To meet this commitment, information should be provided in a language and format that can be understood by migrants, including children. However, research indicates that most migrants continue to rely on family, friends, other migrants, and smugglers as the most trusted and reliable sources of information, rather than governments.⁴ At the same time, there are gaps between the information needed and what is made available, including on safe and secure migration pathways, the conditions in transit and destination countries, access to legal or other assistance, and migrant rights.⁵

Member State reporting during the regional reviews indicates that migrants struggled to access information during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding healthcare, social protection, legal documentation and other basic services.⁶ Often, the lack of access to information was linked to discriminatory laws or policies and other barriers to accessing services. At the same time, many States and local authorities launched awareness-raising initiatives during the pandemic and translated COVID-19 related information into multiple languages to help improve migrants' access to information and health services. During the pandemic, consular services put in place virtual counselling.

¹ The expert group, which was established by the Statistical Commission at its 50th session in 2019 (decision 50/117), includes experts from 21 countries, 18 regional and international organisations and 4 independent experts. See:

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/migration-expert-group/>

² See for instance <https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/project-view-public/>

³ Led by UNICEF, Eurostat, IOM, OECD and UNHCR, [IDAC](#) leverages the power of data to protect and empower migrant children.

⁴ Mixed Migration Centre, [4Mi Interactive – Access to information](#), 2019-2020.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ This is also often the case in situations of displacement in the context of disasters.

Objective 7 - Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration

Migrants may face situations of vulnerability arising from the circumstances in which they travel or the conditions they face in countries of origin, transit and destination. Situations of vulnerability in the context of migration are often the result of policies and practices that fail to protect migrants' human rights, including not upholding the best interests of the child at all times and/or not applying a gender-responsive approach at all stages of migration. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated many of the human rights challenges already faced by migrants in vulnerable situations, including lack of access to health care, decent work, social protection and adequate living conditions.

Member State reporting during the GCM regional reviews indicate that the lack of access to safe and regular pathways, combined with immigration and border procedures introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, have undermined the rights and wellbeing of migrants, their families and societies. Migrant children, for example, have experienced a significant reduction in access to essential services and care. At the same time, during COVID-19, the GCM has proven to be a powerful framework to address situations of vulnerability faced by migrants. In line with the GCM, States have taken action to reduce these risks and vulnerabilities, for instance by providing migrants, regardless of status, with access to COVID-related healthcare services and vaccinations; by extending visa and residence permits to avoid migrants falling into an irregular status; by establishing alternatives to immigration detention; and by halting forced returns. To address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration, countries may wish to expand and diversify safe pathways for regular migration⁷, provide migrants proof of legal identity, documentation and access to basic services, provide accurate and timely information, and to ensure decent work and access to justice. Providing migrants with skills and access to quality education is key so that they can meet labour market needs and benefit. The GCM encourages States to draw on the Global Migration Group's *Principles and Guidelines on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations* to inform the human rights-based implementation of the Global Compact.

Objective 17 - Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration

The GCM recognizes that promoting evidence-based public discourse and confronting anti-migrant sentiments is a crucial part of a comprehensive approach to migration. Accordingly, States have committed to promote a more realistic, humane and constructive public discourse on migration, to eliminate all forms of discrimination, condemn and counter expressions, acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against all migrants, in conformity with international human rights law.

During the regional reviews, few Member States reported on the implementation of Objective 17. The Secretary-General has noted with concern that discrimination, xenophobia, misinformation and stigma against migrants or minorities associated with migration remain virulent, including narratives that falsely associate migrants with criminal activities or heighten anti-immigrant anxieties. During the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants have faced hate speech, racial slurs, stigma and violence related to harmful perceptions that migrants represented a threat to public health. These harmful narratives have fueled security-focused approaches to migration and impacted migrants' human rights, causing further discrimination and violence. At the same time, a number of States have taken positive steps to revise policies and practices in order to combat discrimination and to include migrants in public health and pandemic preparedness and response efforts.

⁷ See UN Network on Migration Guidance Note on Regular Pathways for Admission and Stay for Migrants in Situations of Vulnerability. Available at: https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/default/files/docs/guidance_note-regular_pathways_for_admission_and_stay_for_migrants_in_situations_of_vulnerability_final.pdf

Objective 23 - Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration

International migration inherently involves cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination: no country can address migration singlehandedly. Most migration occurs within specific corridors and within, rather than across, regions. Achieving the objectives and commitments of the GCM requires enhanced bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation, grounded in international law. Joint action is required to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration and to address both the challenges and benefit from the opportunities that migration provide.

During the regional reviews, countries observed that sharing of experiences and seeking joint solutions could strengthen the implementation of the GCM and promote the mutually reinforcing nature between the GCM and existing international legal and policy frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

At the end of December 2021, the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, the first inter-agency pooled funding instrument in the field of migration, had sponsored 12 programmes, focusing on migration governance, migration data, labour recruitment, migrant families in countries of origin, combatting human trafficking, border management, social cohesion, migration health, migration in the context of disasters and climate change, return and reintegration, and capacity development for local governments. One of the Fund's challenges is to develop a portfolio reflecting its 360-degree approach.

3. Guiding questions

- **Objective 1:** What steps can be taken to advance the creation of a global programme for strengthening migration data at local, national, regional and global levels? What are the main obstacles for developing such a programme that is human-rights focused, child-sensitive and gender responsive? How can funding be assured for such a programme? What is the role of regional observatories in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating disaggregated migration-related data and indicators? How can migration data and evidence contribute to informed policy making and public debate?
- **Objective 3:** What challenges do migrants face in accessing information at all stages of migration? What resources and capacity building efforts are essential to ensure accurate, timely, accessible and transparent information at all stages of migration?
- **Objective 7:** How can States and stakeholders effectively address the vulnerabilities that arise from the circumstances in which migrants travel or the conditions they face in countries of origin, transit and destination? What are some promising practices in this regard? What promising practices have States found effective in upholding the best interest of the child in situations where children are concerned and applying a gender-responsive approach in addressing vulnerabilities?
- **Objective 17:** How do harmful narratives impact the human rights of migrants? How have States and other stakeholders countered acts and expressions of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against migrants? How can we generate a more realistic, humane and constructive perception of migrants and migration?
- **Objective 23:** What progress has been made with respect to strengthening bilateral and regional partnerships to promote safe, orderly and regular migration? What are some key recommendations to promote mutually beneficial and transparent partnerships that protect migrants and facilitate safe migration? What are some of the key gaps in international cooperation on migration and how can they be addressed?

Annex

Objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies

- Global Migration Group. [Handbook for Improving the Production and Use of Migration Data for Development. 2017](#)
- International migration and development. Report of the Secretary-General ([A/73/286](#)). Section V. Towards a global programme on migration data
- OHCHR. The right to privacy in the digital age ([A/HRC/48/31](#)) September 2021

Objective 3: Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration

- Council of Europe (CoE), [How to convey child-friendly information to children in migration: A handbook for frontline professionals](#), December 2018
- Human Rights Committee (CCPR), [General Comment No 34 on Freedoms of opinion and expression \(art. 19\)](#), September 2011
- Organization of American States (OAS), [Guiding Principles of the Right of Access to Information](#), 2011

Objective 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration

- UN, [Principles and Guidelines on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations](#), 2018

Objective 17: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration

- Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), [General Recommendation No. 35 on combating racist hate speech](#), September 2013
- OHCHR, [Toolbox on Migration Narrative Change](#), 2020
- OHCHR, [Seven Key Elements on Building Human Rights-Based Narratives on Migrants and Migration](#), 2020
- UN, [United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#), 2019
- UN, [Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence](#), 2013
- UN, [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance](#), 2002

Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration

- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Report of the Secretary-General ([A/75/542](#)).
- Making Migration Work for All. Report of the Secretary-General ([A/72/643](#)).
- OHCHR, [Improving human rights-based governance of international migration](#), 2014