



Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration:

Regional Review in Latin America and the Caribbean

26-28 April 2021

Background Paper

Thematic round table 5: Improving the social inclusion and integration of migrants

Objective GCM #4. Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation

Objective GCM #15. Provide access to basic services for migrants

Objective GCM #16. Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion

Objective GCM #22 Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits

Objective GCM #23. Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration

I. Why does this thematic area matter?? (1 paragraph)

The 2018 World Bank report: *Moving for Prosperity*, indicates that almost all empirical study on the benefit of migration finds that increased labor mobility, when it occurs in a safe, regular and orderly manner, leads to large gains for migrants and positive overall gains for the destination country. The mention of migration as a threat to jobs, wages, welfare programs, the capacity of the national education system, national identity and contributing to crime is not substantiated by empirical studies. This seminal report also clearly states that ‘ignoring the massive economic gains of immigration would be akin to leaving billions of hundred-dollar bills on the sidewalk’ and that the gains for migrants do not come at the expense of host countries, but from their hard work. This allows both migrants and the host country to gain.

The McKinsey Global Institute had estimated that migrants contributed roughly USD 6.7 trillion, or 9.4 per cent, to global GDP in 2015; approximately USD 3 trillion more than they would have produced in their origin countries. Since then, the number of international migrants has increased by over 20 million. This contribution, along with their intangible assets such as skills, ideas, and new perspectives, can only fully benefit society if migrants have the opportunity to fully achieve their potential within their host communities. Social inclusion and integration of migrants are the tools to provide such opportunities by ensuring access to basic services and a welcoming environment for interpersonal interactions. Beyond the immediate contributions that migrants bring with them to their new homes, research has demonstrated the benefits accrued by diverse and inclusive organizations and society, which excel in innovation and entrepreneurialism, characteristics ever more relevant in light of the various crises the former face. Data from the McKinsey Diversity Database shows that companies for example in the 1st percentile of diversity outperformed those in the 4th percentile by more than 35%.

II. What are key challenges and opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean in regard to the objectives of the round table? (2-3 paragraphs)

Socioeconomic integration of migrants reduces vulnerability and maximizes the contribution of migrants, facilitating their sustainable inclusion in host countries. Complementary to humanitarian aid that seeks to support people in their basic needs, socioeconomic integration makes migrants promoters of their own livelihoods, by fostering their sustainable inclusion in host communities and their contribution to local economies.

Latin America and the Caribbean has traditionally been home to open societies which have welcomed and integrated newcomers into their fabric, helping to shape the very societies we see today. However, the impacts of unprecedented migratory flows in the region as result of the situation in Venezuela, coupled with the incalculable socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures implemented to prevent the contagion have strained this openness to extremes. With the informal economy accounting for over 40% on average, and rising to above 70% in some countries, the pandemic has had a particularly harsh impact on the social and economic lives of migrants and host communities in the region. Large proportions of both populations have simply been unable to support their families while abiding by prolonged periods of lockdown and quarantine.

Many countries in the region were already suffering economic slowdowns and in turn found themselves struggling to accommodate the influxes from Venezuela, especially those countries that had been for many generations primarily countries of emigration rather than immigration. While many struggled, by and large countries in the region have remained admirably open to receiving these mobile populations, but with the COVID-19 pandemic and the social and economic disruptions caused thereby, their capacities to guarantee basic services even to local populations has been pushed to the limit. Health systems have been overloaded with attention to victims of the pandemic, while government administration and education systems have been disrupted by the need for social distancing. Migrants, who may already face barriers to access due to language and lack of familiarity with standard procedures and their rights, face double exclusion. This is further exacerbated by the digital divide suffered by mobile populations as services, both administrative and educational, are now provided online. This lack of digital access can directly impact the ability of some migrants to access government services to acquire documentation or access opportunities for regularization.

Social pressures already mounting from the massive influxes experienced by many communities have further stoked by the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, giving rise to increasing xenophobia. While initially tensions were often based on the perceived competition for economic resources, with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic another layer of fear and distrust was sown as mobile populations were seen as drivers of contagion. With quarantines, lockdowns, and social distancing limiting opportunities among groups, contact bridges of mutual understanding have become all the more difficult to construct. However, the new prevalence of online platforms and services create opportunities to develop innovative approaches to connect communities.

III. What are key priority issues to be addressed in the region under the overall objective of the round table?

1. Facilitate the registration and regularization of populations in situations of irregularity in order to ensure full access to social benefits and labour market inclusion.
2. Facilitate socio-economic inclusion of migrants through employment and entrepreneurship, so they can effectively contribute to the recovery and economic reactivation of their host communities.



3. Develop contingency plans for labour migration policies considering granting access of migrant labour to formal economic sectors during a crisis, to address the current COVID-19 pandemic, but also in preparation for future crises, to facilitate the steady flow of labour supply, for the benefit of countries of destination and of countries and communities of origin.
4. Promote social cohesion between migrant and host communities through awareness raising of the important contributions that migrants have made before and during the COVID-19 response and the role they can play in the recovery phase as well as through innovative means of providing opportunities of interaction which can lead to better mutual understanding.
5. Develop strategies to enhance the benefits that migrants bring to their host communities and countries of destination, while minimizing the challenges, for the benefit of all involved: stakeholders, migrants, countries and communities of destination, and countries and communities of origin.

IV. Guiding questions

1. In your view, what do you think are the main challenges preventing social cohesion and social inclusion in migrants hosting communities in LAC? Could you share with participants some examples of achievements? What recommendations would you be able to share, taking into account the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic? What has been done by your organization/ institution to mitigate these effects?
2. The COVID-19 crisis has clearly shown that the national labour force is not a substitute of the migrant labour force, and that a country's economy can be seriously affected by the lack of regular supply of migrant labour. In your views, what challenges has posed the current pandemic to the supply of migrant labour in your country? Has the lack of access to steady flows of migrant labour affected national production? What lessons learnt could be suggested to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future?
3. How do you think that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the GCM implementation in your country and, in particular, the objectives of this thematic table with respect to social inclusion and integration of migrants?
4. Considering the current important development in the economy of Guyana, with reference to oil production, could you share with participants the main challenges and opportunities that the recommendations by the GCM have brought about for your country, and specifically for your Ministry?
5. What areas of opportunities does the GCM present for the private sector with specific reference to migrant labour? In your views, in what ways can the GCM help the private sector ensure safer access to migrant labour force and how can it help specifically during and in the aftermath of this COVID-19 pandemic?

V. Additional related resources *(videos, bibliography, relevant reports or other documents provided by AFPs)*

- Toolkit on Integrating Migration into COVID-19 Socio-economic Response: <https://eea.iom.int/publications/toolkit-development-partners-integrating-migration-COVID-19-socio-economic-response>
- IOM page on Xenophobia: <https://www.iom.int/xenophobia>



- Effects of COVID-19 on Migrants Main Findings Survey in Central America and Mexico June 2020: https://kmhub.iom.int/sites/default/files/publicaciones/surveyeffects_of_covid-19_june_2020_final.pdf
- No Social Exclusion in ‘Social’ Distancing: Leaving No Migrants Behind in COVID-19 Response: https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/no_social_exclusion_in_social_distancing_-_disc_digest_edition_on_covid-19.pdf
- Moving for Prosperity: Global Migration and Labor Markets, World Bank 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/publication/moving-for-prosperity>
- IOM Survey Illuminates COVID-19's Impact on Migrant Population in Central America, Mexico, Survey June 2020: <https://rosanjose.iom.int/SITE/en/news/iom-survey-illuminates-covid-19s-impact-migrant-population-central-america-mexico#:~:text=Virtual%20Library-,IOM%20Survey%20Illuminates%20COVID%2D19's%20Impact%20on,Population%20in%20Central%20America%2C%20Mexico&text=At%20the%20same%20time%2C%20four,reduced%20due%20to%20COVID%2D19>