



GCM Champions' countries initiative - GCM Talk

Building a balanced/evidence-based narrative around migration and migrants

Summary Report

The Champion countries GCM Talk on building a balanced/evidence-based narrative around migration and migrants took place online on 14 February 2024. This event was co-hosted by the Republic of El Salvador and the Kingdom of Morocco, co-chairs of the Champion countries initiative (Initiative), as part of the implementation of the Initiative's workplan.

The event was supported by the IOM Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa and the UN Network on Migration secretariat. The GCM talk aimed at addressing the pressing need for an evidence-based narrative on migration, in line with Objective 17 of the Global Compact for Migration and served as a platform for discussions around the challenges of deconstructing/reconstructing the narrative on migration and migrants to counter xenophobia, racism, and all forms of discrimination.

Opening remarks from the co-chairs highlighted the imperative to promote balanced narratives on migration through collaborative efforts across all sectors of society. Despite significant progress achieved in implementing the GCM, there remains a pressing concern regarding the proliferation of negative narratives surrounding migration. In light of this challenge, the co-chairs reiterated their unwavering dedication to raising awareness and enhancing understanding of migration dynamics—a key priority outlined in the workplan under the Morocco-Salvadorian co-chairmanship.

Furthermore, the pivotal role of both traditional media and social media networks in shaping perceptions of migration was underscored, whether by highlighting migrants' economic and socio-economic contributions or by promoting positive migration narratives. The co-chairs encouraged representatives of fellow Champions as well as all stakeholders to actively engage in addressing these issues, emphasizing the shared responsibility in fostering a more balanced and informed discourse on migration.

The head of the UN Network on Migration Secretariat acknowledged the leadership, diversity, and expertise among Champions and speakers gathered for the meeting. The urgency of addressing migration amidst polarized perceptions was emphasized, particularly in the context of elections, and the need for a narrative based on facts and rights. In addition, the importance of the GCM in fostering open discourse and combating hate speech was highlighted, as well as the role of robust evidence and inclusive participation in addressing migration challenges. Lastly, various avenues for action were suggested including inclusivity, redefining language, leadership, and determination, while offering support through discussion spaces, tools, and advocacy.



Appreciating the usefulness of the platform to exchange views and practices, it was recommended that the referred practices be shared amongst participants to allow for effective follow-up.

Pannel 1: Promoting a positive narrative about migration and migrants in the media and on social networks.

- Ms. Julissa Landaverde, Director of Analysis and Partnership of Human Mobility – El Salvador
- Ms. Carolina Hernandez, Migration Unit Coordinator at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Mr. Salaheddine Lemaizi, co-founder of the independent digital media ENASS and President of the Moroccan Network of Migration Journalists (RMJM).

The global media landscape plays a key role in shaping migration narratives, often perpetuating negative stereotypes and discriminatory rhetoric. Discussions underscored the prevalent impact of such divisive narratives on migrants and broader society, leading to violence, policy restrictions, and social division.

Speakers stressed the imperative of countering harmful narratives surrounding migration by actively challenging stereotypes and discrimination and combatting sensationalism and biases. They emphasized the importance of transparent and responsible reporting, advocating for the inclusion of migrants in shaping narratives about their own experiences.

Recommendations included adopting practices such as avoiding stigmatizing language, providing balanced information, and showcasing migrants' contributions to society. Furthermore, speakers stressed the importance of upholding professional ethics and fostering community engagement to ensure a more balanced and accurate portrayal of migration issues. Education and awareness initiatives were identified as crucial in combatting xenophobic narratives, facilitating a more positive and inclusive approach to migration reporting.



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Examples of good practices identified:

- The Higher Institute of Information and Communication in Morocco specializes in higher education and training for journalism and communication with migration and asylum components incorporated in its initial training courses as well as a specialized media and migration master's degree to train professionals on migration issues.
- The African Migration Observatory established in Morocco to enhance cooperation and promote evidence-based discourse, policies and planning.
- Immigration Matters Canada is a government platform which aims to shape positive narratives and combat xenophobia and discrimination through migrant stories with facts and data and highlighting migrant's contributions to various sectors.
- The GFMD's working group on public narratives facilitates knowledge sharing and collaboration among states and non-state actors.
- "It Takes a Community" Communication Guide by OHCHR which offers valuable insights into effective narrative-building strategies and highlight successful global initiatives.
- Portugal is one of the first countries to approve a GCM National Implementation Plan designed as an operational document currently under review.
- In its communication, the Portuguese Ministry for Labour and Social Security emphasized the positive impact of migrants, providing data showing that foreign workers make up 13% of the workforce and their contributions amounted to 1.5 billion euros.
- El Salvador has taken steps to promote a positive narrative about migration through its official publications on social media. The Government of El Salvador is against using negative and discriminatory language in publications. For example, the use of the term "illegal migrant" is no longer accepted in official publications, as it is considered discriminatory.
- El Salvador emphasizes the positive contributions of migrants to development and advocates for their human rights in official communications, complying with the international frameworks on human mobility.

Panel II Theme: The discourse on migration in political debate and public policymaking.

- Mr. Ivan Gaitan, Counsellor for Migration Affairs, Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia
- Ms. Carolina Gottardo, International Detention Coalition (IDC):
- Ms. Stella Opoku-Owusu, Executive Director at African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)

The panel addressed a spectrum of challenges and opportunities associated with good migration governance, spanning social, economic, and cultural realms. The discussions served to underscore the critical importance of establishing orderly migration pathways while shedding light on the pivotal role of professional training, education, and capacity-building initiatives. These endeavors are instrumental in empowering migrants to make meaningful societal contributions and gain access to essential social and economic entitlements. Such a paradigm shift reframes the narrative surrounding migration, transcending the traditional portrayal of migrants solely as recipients of aid or burdens on society. Instead, it embraces a perspective that recognizes migrants as invaluable assets capable of enriching host communities on



various fronts - economically, socially, and culturally. This narrative evolution challenges outdated stereotypes that depict migrants as lacking in skills or as societal liabilities. Rather, it positions them as individuals endowed with diverse talents and capabilities that, when harnessed, can yield mutual benefits for both migrants and host societies alike.

The importance of policymakers in promoting evidence-based narratives on migration and providing avenues for migrant voices to be heard was highlighted. Crafting such narratives requires sustained long-term commitment, involving the dedication of time, resources, and collaborative efforts across various societal sectors. Discussions underscored the invaluable contributions of civil society organizations (CSOs), migrant-led groups, and diasporas in shaping constructive migration narratives. Examples were provided to illustrate the efforts of various stakeholders in increasing awareness, dispelling misconceptions, and advocating for policies that protect migrants' rights.

Examples of good practices identified:

- The municipality of Bogota in Colombia is actively promoting the inclusion of migrants by ensuring that they feel like integrated citizens and regularizing their status. This approach has changed the narratives about migration, created new opportunities to increase and dynamize the city's economy, and fostered social, cultural, and culinary cohesion to integrate migrants into the municipality. The authorities have also provided educational training to officers, policemen, and other officials to prevent the stigmatization of migrants and discrimination against them.
- Indonesia's National Action Plan on the implementation of the GCM emphasizes and evidenced based approach with the establishment of an integrated migration data system.
- Indonesian citizens care portal is an online platform to better inform and provide consular protection to migrants.
- CSOs' Advocacy and Awareness Initiatives such as the International Detention Coalition to challenge negative migration narratives, raise awareness, and advocate for migrants' rights.
- Diaspora engagement in development with examples from countries like Ghana and the 'Year of Return' Campaign leveraging diaspora contributions for economic development through heritage and cultural tourism.

Panel III: Promoting positive migrant stories.

- Ms. Stephanie Leung, Director, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- Ms. Gilda Murillo, Diaspora and Development Department, MFA El Salvador
- Ms. Mirela Stoia, International Organisation of Employers. Co-lead Labour Migration Portfolio
- Ms. Jenna Hennebry, Wilfred Laurier University and Gender+Migration Hub
- Ms. Ayaat ElHabbal, Journalist and Producer



Discussions highlighted the pivotal role of collaborative initiatives between governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector, such as social media campaigns and storytelling platforms, in amplifying positive messages about migration.

In particular, the discussions underscored advocacy efforts from the private sector to focus on creating more effective and flexible pathways for regular migration, aligning with the objectives of the GCM. Additionally, the private sector plays a key role in promoting fair and ethical recruitment practices and recognizing the contributions of migrants.

Furthermore, discussions covered the gendered nature of migration narratives, including the need to combat traditional narratives that depict women migrants as vulnerable, dependent, and in need of protection, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and justifying discriminatory policies. Countering these narratives requires a multifaceted approach that involves directly engaging women migrants in shaping their own stories, challenging harmful stereotypes through data-driven evidence, and promoting a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in migration.

Recommendations included the need for capacity-building efforts to extend beyond government agencies to include civil society organizations, community groups, and academia, empowering a wide range of actors to contribute to migration governance.



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Example of good practices identified:

- Canada's funding of a third party community organization to provide opportunities for meaningful exchange and intercultural learning between newcomers and their host communities.
- In 2022, El Salvador developed the initiative "Escribiendo Historias de la Diaspora", which collected successful stories from the Salvadoran Diaspora in each consulate and embassy. With those stories, El Salvador is also working on elaborating a book "libro de la diáspora salvadoreña" to share positive experiences.
- In 2023, El Salvador launched the first season of the documentary series "Viajando con la Diaspora", which promotes the stories of the diaspora in their destination countries, recognizing their link to the origin country and promoting regular migration. These initiatives promote positive narratives, showing the added value of migrants to build social cohesion and more respectful societies.

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Annex:

Title	Link
OHCHR #StandUp4Migrants	https://www.standup4humanrights.org/migration/en/index.html
OHCHR Report on Seven key elements on building human rights-based narratives on migrants and migration (2020)	https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/seven-key-elements-building-human-rights-based-narratives-migrants
GFMD Global outlook on public attitudes to immigration: from description to explanation to intervention	https://www.gfmd.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1801/files/documents/france2023/Global%20Migration%20Narratives%20Outlook%20-%20FINAL%202024%20.pdf
GFMD Summary for Policymakers: Global Outlook on Public Attitudes to Immigration: From Description to Explanation to Intervention	https://www.gfmd.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1801/files/documents/france2023/GFMD24%20-%20Global%20Migration%20Narratives%20Outlook%20-%20Summary%20for%20Policymakers.pdf
GFMD Guide to Promoting a Balanced Dialogue	https://www.gfmd.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1801/files/documents/gfmd_communications_guide_on_shaping_public_narratives_on_migration_2020_0.pdf
Canada Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) free online course	https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus.html
Canada #ImmigrationMatters Campaign	https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/campaigns/immigration-matters.html
Examples of Canada Community Connections services	-In western Canada: https://archway.ca/program/community-connections/



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	<p>-In central Canada: https://www.lcclc.org/community-connections</p> <p>-In eastern Canada: https://www.ancnl.ca/services/volunteer-connections/</p>
El Salvador Documentary Viajando con la Diaspora	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeBKZ1VgIV4
Canada's "Gender-based Analysis Plus" online training - for gender mainstreaming	https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus/take-course.html
Voces y sonidos de la diáspora	https://rree.gob.sv/cancilleria-celebra-el-dia-del-salvadoreno-en-el-exterior-con-acto-cultural-en-el-museo-nacional-de-antropologia/
Presentación Viajando con la diáspora	https://rree.gob.sv/cancilleria-realiza-lanzamiento-del-documental-viajando-con-la-diaspora-en-el-marco-del-dia-del-salvadoreno-en-el-exterior/
Escribiendo historias de la diáspora	https://rree.gob.sv/consulado-general-de-el-salvador-en-duluth-presenta-proyecto-escribiendo-historias-de-la-diaspora-sv/
Gender + Migration Hub	https://gendermigrationhub.org/