

## IMRF Dialogue Series – Whole of Society Approach: Government-Civil Society Partnerships on Alternatives to Immigration Detention (ATD)

31 March 2022, 9:30-11am NY time/15:30 – 17:00 CET  
Voices from the frontline of ATD

### Concept Note

#### 1. Co-leads

International Detention Coalition (IDC), UNHCR, UNICEF

#### 2. Objectives

The webinar will raise awareness about the advantages of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) whole-of-society approach<sup>1</sup> for achieving effective alternatives to immigration detention (ATD). It will highlight positive examples where governments and civil society have come together to make ATD work in certain settings, despite the fact that they may not be in alignment on all aspects of migration-related policies. Many States and stakeholders are unaware of these promising examples, and they may not have considered the advantages of such partnerships, with the specific strengths that different organisations can contribute to making ATD work – in a way that respects migrants’ rights and their dignity, while also allowing States to govern migration humanely and effectively.

This webinar will provide the opportunity to hear about specific practical examples of government-civil society partnerships on ATD, from the perspectives of different parties – including reflections on how obstacles have been overcome to make such partnerships work, and hearing from the people directly involved in this implementation, including people with lived experience. By showcasing these examples, this webinar will promote the potential for replicating locally-adapted versions of government-civil society ATD partnerships, and to utilize the opportunities for progress on Objective 13 of the GCM offered by the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).

#### 3. Background

As the UN Secretary General stated in his [December 2021 report](#) on the GCM: “Policies, practices and conditions associated with immigration detention, including arbitrary deprivation of liberty, overcrowding and poor access to services, profoundly affect physical and mental health, well-being and child development. They undermine access to fair immigration processes and violate human rights.”

In Objective 13 of the GCM, governments reaffirmed the commitment “to prioritize non-custodial alternatives to detention that are in line with international law, and to take a human rights-based approach to any detention of migrants”. Under the current international framework, this translates into using immigration detention as a measure of last resort only

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Compact promotes broad multi-stakeholder partnerships to address migration in all its dimensions by including migrants, diasporas, local communities, civil society, academia, the private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions, National Human Rights Institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders in migration governance.

and never resorting to immigration detention for children. Even when immigration detention is used as an exceptional measure of last resort, the norm should be non-detention for migration governance purposes.

Immigration detention is defined here as any setting in which a person is deprived of liberty for reasons related to migration status, regardless of its physical location, the name or justification used, or its classification in domestic law.

ATD allows individuals, families and children to live safely in the community with access to essential services, while engaging with their migration procedures. ATD is not a legally defined term and has therefore been interpreted in distinct ways. Regardless of these different approaches, there is broad consensus that ATD are a wide range of non-custodial measures and practices that, based on human rights, do not imply restrictions on liberty and avoid the use of detention for reasons related to migration. It is this definition that will be used for the purpose of this webinar, which will focus on the partnership issue, rather than on any definitional issues.

#### 4. Proposed Structure

- Min 0-5: Welcome and setting the stage by IDC, Co-lead of the WG with a brief thematic introduction and setting out the importance of the whole-of-society approach to achieving effective ATD.
- Min 5-40 Government-Civil Society Partnerships on ATD in practice  
This session moderated by a civil society ATD implementer  
Guest Speakers:  
Guest Speakers 1: UK experience
- Alison Wray, UK Home Office
  - Julian Prior, former CEO of Action Foundation, on the government-civil society partnership
  - UNHCR UK, on the evaluation of the Action Access ATD pilot programme
- Guest Speakers 2: Cyprus experience
- George Thoma, Government of Cyprus Migration Department
  - Memnon Arestis, Cyprus Refugee Council
- Min 40-55 Q&A and interventions from the audience, focused on other examples of government-civil society partnerships at national level in the context of ATD
- Min 55 - 70 Guest Speakers 3: Local-level experience
- Local authority in southern Mexico (TBC)
  - Mexican civil society (TBC)
  - Tania Velasquez, UN Major Group for Children and Youth, on impacts of immigration detention on returnees' health and abilities to reintegrate/need for whole-of-society approach to supporting migrants
- Min 70-85 Q&A and interventions from the audience, focused on other examples of government-civil society partnerships at local level in the context of ATD
- Min 85 to 90 UNICEF, Co-lead of WG to conclude, highlighting the potential for further peer learning opportunities, and the potential that the IMRF offers in terms of advancing on implementation of Objective 13 of the GCM