Background Paper GFMD 2020

Roundtable Theme 4: Addressing Gaps in Migrant Protection[1]

I. Introduction

1. In a year and across years to come unlike many others in recent memory, almost everyone is **looking for solutions** in three fully global and long-lasting COVID-19-related crises: the health pandemic, the global economic crisis, and what UN Secretary-General António Guterres calls the *protection crisis* for migrants and refugees. What practices and partnerships save lives? What practices and partnerships *restore* lives, safety and dignity? Which save and create decent jobs; which build human development and economies that are sustainable and leave no one behind?

2. **The experience and images of these crises are ubiquitous and devastating.** Globally, over 1.6 million dead from the virus alone, and the numbers of people infected, hospitalized and dying on the rise amidst surges and even second or more waves in every region of the world. Schools, cities and borders in lockdown; jobs, earnings, industries, business activity and economies in cycles of shutdown and freefall. Scientists, medical experts, business leaders, employers and workers organizations, civil society actors, including migrants, refugees and diaspora organizations, and government decision-makers working at every level to respond, urgently—and often in partnership.

3. **Travel and mobility restrictions,** along with border closures put in place to limit transmission of the virus, have left significant numbers of stranded migrants around the world, including workers, temporary work permit holders, skilled and bridging vis holders, international students and migrants in vulnerable situations. These situations have had a direct impact on their migratory status.

4. It is clear that **migrants, refugees, the diaspora and members of their families are a key part of solutions** in these three crises, from providing life-saving healthcare to performing other essential services in home, elder and child care, farming, meatpacking, food sales, construction and public transportation, and in the enormous value of the jobs, businesses, income and remittances they create.

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[1] Guided by Mexico and Morocco, the Co-Chairs of this Roundtable, and with the assistance of the GFMD Support Unit, this paper is based principally on recommendations and inputs from more than two hundred States and representatives of Mayors, civil society, business, youth and international and regional organizations in twelve regional GFMD meetings that the UAE Chair organized around the world this year. The paper has benefitted from further inputs from the governments of Australia, Indonesia, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Switzerland, Thailand, Uruguay and Venezuela; the Business, Civil Society and Mayoral Mechanisms of the GFMD; Alianza Americas, the Congregation of the Mission, Mercy International Association, the Mixed Migration Centre and NGO Committee on Migration/New York; the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Platform on Disaster Displacement and UNICEF; and direct exchange in Practitioner Group and Roundtable preparatory meetings of the GFMD Friends of the Forum.

However, as further described below, the degree to which migrants, refugees, the diaspora and members of their families are part of the solutions can depend on the degree to which they are included in sound systems of migration and protection. That is, **protection of migrants of all kinds is also protection of development,** in countries from, through and to which people move. As IOM Director General António Vitorino put it in October, "If we are unable to relaunch migration and mobility safely, the world's ability to recover from economic recession will be limited."

5. It is little surprise then that States, civil society actors, businesses, city leaders, and international and regional organizations worldwide are jumping to **consider *practices*, and *partnering in practices*, that work to respond in the three crises, to recover from them, and to "do better" going forward.** Propelling partnerships in practice is a major emphasis of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Chair of the 2020 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), and this roundtable aims to do that.

6. Among other processes at international, regional, national and local levels, the 2020 GFMD has turned its attention to identifying and addressing gaps in migrant protection in particular. In doing so, the GFMD recognizes that gaps in protection create clear risks not only to migrants but to development.

7. The concept paper of the UAE Chair set out **these areas of focus in particular for this GFMD 2020 Roundtable**, addressing gaps in migrant protection:

    (1) Protection of migrants **in transit** (note: not just on the move)
    (2) Protection of migrants **in admission and policies of inclusion**, including access to social services and justice, and portability of benefits
    (3) Protection of migrants **in labour agreements and in the informal economy**

II. Key issues

8. While the global pandemic and economic crises affect virtually all countries and people, evidence is clear (and is presented below) that **the pandemic, economic and protection crises exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities and create many more disproportionately for migrants, the diaspora, and their family members.** This is true whether they are moving voluntarily or not, residing or working temporarily or longer term, and even settled. In many cases it is also true regardless of the immigration status of the migrants, diaspora and their family members.

9. Before and also separate from COVID-19 phenomena, these vulnerabilities can be traced to many **root causes and drivers.** Migration forced, driven or brutalized by wide imbalances in demographics, finance and trade structures; unequal and inequitable economies and governance, including with respect to channels for human mobility; situations of conflict, disasters, the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation; and gender inequality all increase the number and vulnerabilities of migrants, the diaspora and their family members. Exclusionary nationalism, xenophobia and discrimination pile on, including hardened obstacles to admission, employment and rights to health, other public services and justice.

10. In this sense, **wreckage wrought by COVID-19 is just one more example of a cause and driver of vulnerability and gaps in migrant protection.** The scale however, has been epic: migrants "last hired and first fired" in large numbers, sick and dying of COVID disproportionately, often with little or no medical treatment; stranded with no income and little or no resources, many left on the streets; doors everywhere slammed to new migrants and even those trying to return home—and paradoxically, many pushed back regardless of their vulnerability, rights to protection, or wages earned; whole migrant families, including children and older generations seeing the evaporation of earnings and

remittances, food security, prospects for education and decent work of their own; all turbo-charging opportunities for human traffickers and migrant smugglers, runaway debt bondage and even outright slavery.

11. Unable because of pandemic disruptions to meet visa requirements or to access visa processes, including for renewals and extensions, migrant livelihoods and residence permits have been compromised widely. With limited access to support, including gaps in crucial consular assistance to help with returns and with mitigating the effects of the pandemic on their migratory status, many migrants found themselves in an irregular situation through no fault of their own.

12. As always, **among the most vulnerable** migrants are those undocumented or at risk of falling into undocumented or irregular status; in detention or other enforcement proceedings; children and young people; victims of trauma, trafficking or other violence—including women and others at risk of persecution or violence on account of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Regardless of immigration status, those working in informal and domestic sectors, and their family members have been especially hard hit in the crises.

13. Addressing gaps in migrant protection cannot be complete without addressing **root causes and drivers.** In recent years, UN Member States agreed explicitly and unanimously on that point in the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** (SDGS, 2015) and the **New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants** (2016). Member States expressed further agreement on commitments and actions to do so in their near-unanimous endorsements of the two Global Compacts on Refugees and for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration, both in 2018[2].

14. Beyond root cases and drivers, **those frameworks also reflect broad agreement on alternatives and solutions to address gaps in protection for migrants** who have already moved, whether in phases of transit, destination or return. In that direction, and complementing efforts to address root causes and drivers, States, civil society, business and city participants in the twelve regional GFMD meetings that focused this year on addressing gaps in migrant protection showed **clear signs of shared interest** to exchange upon, and consider partnerships on a range of practices that help to address gaps in protection of those who have already move

III. Building on shared interest and common ground

15. Participants in the twelve regional GFMD meetings that focused on this theme talked as much about *who* should be partners as they did about *what* partners should do to address gaps in migrant protection. Thirteen years on in the GFMD process, this marries the emphasis of the Ecuador 2019 GFMD Chair on a "pivot to practice" with the priority on partnership that the UAE 2020 GFMD Chair has placed in its overall theme for this year.

16. Good partnerships require the "right" or "key" partners. Success at partnership requires not only reasonable convergence—but also capacity. But the central purpose of partners coming together in partnership is precisely that: to bring and boost important capacity to achieve shared objectives.

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[2] The SDGs, New York Declaration and the two Global Compacts are broadly consistent with relevant human rights law and labour standards, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization, among others.

17. Joining States and civil society actors with urgency, fresh energy and healthy impatience:
    a. **Mayors and local authorities are key partners,** "on the ground" where people are, work and live. Cities and towns are first and daily responders, often partners *with* the national government but doing more effectively many things that only the cities can do simply because they are physically closest to the people. This includes immediate welcome and protection of new arrivals, and support for local housing, urgent medical care, education and employment. As a practical matter, even integration is largely local. For example, in **Senegal, Dakar** has commissioned a Technical Counsellor (*Conseillière technique du Maire de Dakar*) to work on the protection of children.

       Across the regional GFMD meetings this year, Mayors and local authorities highlighted the innovative actions and partnerships they have created within their current mandates and budget but also elevated clear challenges that hamper their ability to address gaps in migrant protection, including the need for: decentralization of migration governance and a stronger role of local governments in all the phases of migration policy making; better localized data on migrant populations and their needs; and adequate resources for local authorities who respond to them.

    b. **Private sector actors are also essential partners**, including the innumerable businesses created, staffed by, or reliant upon the patronage of migrants, refugees, the diaspora and members of their families. Jobs are centers for integration as well as production, income and development. In **Morocco,** for example, a recent agreement between the Ministry in charge of Migration, la *Confédération Générale des Enterprises du Maroc* (CGEM) and the **UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)** aims to facilitate integration of refugees, including better employment opportunities.

18. **The people affected are always essential partners,** and should always be included in discussion and decision-making on policies and programmes that affect them. Inclusion must be a habit, not occasional, indeed, *inclusive dialogue* is an underestimated form of partnership. This is not just to be democratic or "politically correct": it is also to be effective. For example, in the border regions of **Cameroon, Gabon** and **Equatorial Guinea,** when civil society groups created a platform for local administrations and other authorities—including border police—to meet and exchange with migrants altogether at the table, and "there were no reprisals, no more attacks."

IV. Recommendations with Examples of concrete Practices and Partnerships
   - *directly from States, Mayors, civil society and business leaders*

19. Referring frequently to corresponding objectives, commitments and actions in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, States, civil society, business and city leaders participating in the twelve regional GFMD meetings on this theme, and with verbal and written inputs since, commended the following solutions or part-solutions to respond to and recover from the three crises.

20. **Respond urgently to urgent COVID-related problems of migrants and refugees;** among others:
    a. **Ensure equitable access to COVID prevention measures, testing and treatment, and to vaccines when they are available.** In **Australia** and the **UAE** for example**,** everyone is to have equal access to testing and treatment regardless of nationality or migration status, including free treatment for all who require it.

    b. **Ensure that migrants can also enjoy other basic services, including access to shelter when they are on the streets** because of lost work or evictions, or lack of access to shelter systems or public housing because of their immigration status. For example, in **Mexico,** temporary shelters and voluntary isolation centers were established for migrants living on the streets or in transit, regardless of status, in order to mitigate their exposure to the virus. As one city representative

put it, "We don't want special programmes unless necessary", but "if we don't *strengthen* protection and access to social programmes, we have already seen that they will be forced to live on the streets."

In response to the pandemic, the city of **Bristol, UK** temporarily allowed asylum seekers and migrants with "no access to public funds status to access local public housing. **Milan, Italy** partnered with a non-profit agency to provide COVID-19 health monitoring in shelters for homeless people and unaccompanied migrant youth.

In **Uruguay,** "**Montevideo** has a fund," one participant reported, "so that migrants are not thrown out of where they live, whether rented or shared housing."

c. **Assist migrants stranded** where they are, including seafarers, or even in return, in countries along the way home or blocked at their own country's border. One participant described migrants camping outside their embassies waiting for help to get home, even as winter arrives.

A representative of one State described thousands of workers trapped without resources in countries not their own when the ships they worked on were locked down by COVID restrictions. Because their own countries were unprepared or unable to help much, many were "on the streets for months." The participant urged establishing a *mechanism* to assist those nationals and migrants in such circumstances.

Venezuela's "Return to the Homeland Plan" assists vulnerable Venezuelans voluntarily returning with safe transfer, opportunities for employment and reintegration. A National Board for the Protection of Children and Adolescents works to coordinate among national agencies responsible for protecting children and adolescents returning from situations of vulnerability abroad, including unaccompanied minors, beginning even before they return.

d. **Speed-up and simplify regularization of residence and employment eligibility,** including documents. As representatives of the cities and other participants described, the COVID emergency has made it painfully clear how important it is to streamline, even relax rules and procedures that are just too heavy and slow—e.g., 6 months or more—for migrants and refugees to access essential healthcare, work and housing even in ordinary times.

e. Enable **functionality of anti-trafficking systems *in emergency conditions,*** to ensure proactive identification of victims of human trafficking and people at risk to trafficking among migrants and refugees, as well as access to a package of services to meet their immediate needs during the period of reduced possibilities for national or transnational referral, protection, investigation of the case and court proceedings. In **Mexico,** for example, services to respond to human trafficking and other forms of violence that affect migrants were declared essential to ensure they could continue running during the pandemic, including the possibility to file and resolve complaints.

21. **"Learn the COVID lessons" that have value for recovery and long-term solutions.** In particular:
    a. **Ensure that essential health services are accessible to all,** without discrimination, and that migrants have access to relevant health information. COVID has reminded the world that no one is protected unless everyone is protected. As one of the States put it: public health in such a context is the very essence of a shared interest, "even in a selfish way".

    But because this can be complicated, States need to partner with other actors to ensure that migrants and refugees have genuine access to quality health care services, throughout the migration continuum, regardless of their immigration status and without fear of being punished or deported for it. Participants mentioned several States going in this direction recently, including

Spain, Mexico, Morocco and the **UAE,** as well as city leaders that have built municipal health care systems to ensure migrant inclusion regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.

New York City launched a municipal program in 2019 to expand universal health care so that regardless of insurance, ability to pay, or immigration status all residents can seek services without fear of discrimination. Having established this program prior to COVID-19 was critical to the city's ability to respond rapidly and inclusively when the pandemic hit.

b. Beyond testing and treatment, ensure migrants and refugees have equal **access to economic and social support to respond to the economic impact of the pandemic,** such as food aid, cash assistance, technology to overcome the digital divide, and employment support.

c. **Expand effective community-based alternatives to detention** in contexts of immigration enforcement, in all cases for children, for whom such detention is never in the child's best interest and therefore a violation of their rights under the near universally-ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child, and for family members, among others. The pandemic—and a range of measures in this direction by States including **Belgium, France, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Peru, Mexico, Spain, Thailand, the UK** and **the US**—have opened a window of opportunity that showcases how migration can be managed effectively without resorting to detention.

The **International Detention Coalition** (IDC) has partnered with **UNICEF** and others in a global multi-stakeholder initiative that supports States in addressing the practical challenges they face when putting in place alternatives to child immigration detention. The Cross-Regional Peer Learning Platform on Alternatives to Child Immigration Detention provides an umbrella for government experts to engage in peer exchange, with technical support from a wide range of stakeholders.

d. **Recognize regularization of residence and employment as a fair, wise and practical measure** for migrants and refugees, including those with irregular or undocumented status who perform essential services, notably workers in health care in hospitals, group or home settings; farm work, meatpacking, food stores and public transportation, whether the workers are permanent or seasonal, or based on land or sea. **Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Italy, New Zealand** and **Spain** among others were commended for recent measures in this direction, either with extensions of work and residence visas, temporary regularization, or in some cases, special bridging visas, e.g., where COVID-19 poses a reasonable barrier to the ability of an individual to depart the country even though their presence is otherwise unauthorized.

In **Canada,** following successful advocacy from the public and municipality of **Montreal,** the **federal government** and **Province of Quebec** agreed to offer permanent residency to asylum-seekers working in essential healthcare fields.

e. Turn to **building a *culture* that regularizes migration *and* employment *and* economies.** Not just for the COVID crisis, but also to emerge sooner and stronger from the related global economic crisis: leveraging regular pathways and regularized status as clear incentives to shift choices and the paradigm from irregular-to-regular migration and employment, and from informal-to-formal employment and economies.

22. **Update migration policies by putting regularity structurally at the center.** Participants observed that the lack of reality- and opportunity- based migration policies exacerbates vulnerability and protection problems for migrants and refugees *and* blocks economic and human development. No one disputed that the lack of regular pathways increases irregular migration, even driving migrants and refugees to

seek and use dangerous routes, exposing them to exploitation by unscrupulous actors and human trafficking networks.

Putting regularity at the center calls for policies that:

a. **Adopt predictable, flexible, transparent and rights-sensitive labour migration policies** at all skills levels that work for protection *and* for development. Business participants were further emphatic that such policies are essential to strong labour markets, to innovation, businesses and economies—both filling *and creating* jobs.

   This issue achieved the greatest convergence by far among participants across all twelve of the regional GFMD meetings that took up addressing migrant protection, and all four GFMD groups. Moreover, representatives of all four GFMD groups expressed willingness to partner together in this direction.[3]

   Cities of **Milan and Turin** in **Italy; Tunis and Sfax** in **Tunisia; and Beni Mellal and Tangier** in **Morocco** partner in the MeNTOR (Mediterranean Network for Training Orientation to Regular Migration) project to promote legal migration paths through co-development cooperation projects. Young participants from Morocco and Tunisia have trained in companies located in the **Lombardy** and **Piedmont regions** and attend coaching on business start-up and job placement during and after their stay in Italy. With cooperation between the cities, employment agencies and NGOs, MeNTOR contributes to the interns' access to labour market and entrepreneurial skills, as well as to the development of local communities.

b. **Regularize the good recruitment processes and finally terminate the bad ones.** Participants across the GFMD groups consistently described the reality of many current recruitment practices, for lower skilled migrants in particular, as a mess of abuse that is gross, conspicuous, in clear violation of international labour standards— and avoidable. Several participants described situations of outrageous debt bondage, forced labour, and gender-based violence.

   Participants said that existing arrangements, including most bilateral labour agreements, were broadly failing in these regards. It is time to insist on protection in formal and enforceable intergovernmental agreements, with strong sanctions available *and imposed* on abusers whoever they are.

   Participants expressed appreciation of two forms of partnership working to fix recruitment: (1) the work of **ILO** on fair recruitment standards, and **IOM** on a code of conduct; and (2) public agencies that directly regulate recruitment actors or dynamics, like **Morocco** is promoting, including in partnership with **Spain**, with contracts that respect rights on duration of work, salary and social benefits consistent with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

   As one business participant put it, "We need to be a better regulator of the recruitment industry, particularly those actors responsible for sending people overseas. They need to be registered, and they need to be subject to legal authority to make sure that they're doing things correctly."

c. Invest significantly more on **skills recognition, matching, mobility and development**—and in related partnerships—in order to fully harness the potential of migrants and refugees for their own development and the development of their communities and countries.[4]

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[3] Addressing this gap in protection also relates to the separate GFMD 2020 themes 1: the Governance of Labour Migration, and 5: Discussing Approaches to Prevent Irregular Migration.

[4] Addressing this gap also relates to the separate GFMD theme 2: Skilling Migrants for Employment.

Social partners play a key role in supporting skills partnerships and programmes. In **Sri Lanka,** for example, employers have supported the government in establishing a skills database aimed for launch in July, including a "skills passport" based on certification and recognition of prior learning.

One business participant pointed to the two-way benefit of migrants and refugees with talent and skills needing work, and employers needing them for that work. Taking action in the pandemic, municipalities across the province of **Buenos Aires**, **Argentina** hired migrants from Venezuela with professional medical degrees that had not yet been revalidated by the national government. Some 4,500 doctors, nurses, and other health professionals were hired. Similarly, in **Mexico,** the national government established an expedited mechanism for the recognition of experienced migrant and refugee health workers to join the country's COVID response.

   d. Ensure **social protection floors** for migrant workers and their family members, and their genuine access to rights and public services such as healthcare, education, crisis relief programmes and justice without discrimination or recrimination. These would further be an important part of incentives to move from informal to formal employment.

   e. Guarantee **portability of rights and earned benefits,** including to reclaim wages for work performed, and pensions. Representatives from States and civil society described a dynamic new multi-stakeholder partnership on Transitional Justice, created to help migrant workers everywhere recover wages for work they did in another country but have not been paid for since the onset of the COVID pandemic.

   f. Elevate **family reunification,** which has rarely been the subject of focus in GFMD processes, de-spite how paramount "family" is to decisions regarding migration and re-migration, employment and remittances, self-protection and human development.

23. Organize consistent **needs-first assistance and protection for the full mix of migrants and refugees vulnerable in transit and upon arrival, including in mixed migration,** extending in particular to those that international mechanisms and mandates have been comparatively slow to address:

   a. victims of violence and trauma in contexts of migration—and those helping and defending them
   b. migrants displaced by the adverse effects of climate change, disasters and environmental disaster degradation, with systematic data collection for evidence-based discussion and policymaking
   c. those being returned to countries of transit or origin involuntarily

24. Improve protection of domestic workers, women, children, young people and others, including LGBT **people, who have specific—and well-documented—vulnerabilities in contexts of migration.** ILO estimates 11 million migrant women are in domestic work, many providing care services. They and other people should always be included directly and meaningfully in development of the policies that affect them.

One of the most effective ways of "protecting them" is by empowering them: engaging them as partners with a seat, voice and vote at the table. In the **IGAD region in East Africa** for example, National Coordination Mechanisms bring together State and non-state actors, including migrant associations, to discuss all issues related to migration, an approach that the **African Union** is now replicating in other AU Member States. The growth and impact of the **Youth Forum** within the processes of the GFMD, including in the regional meetings and many of these recommendations, is raised as best practice in this regard.

In the summer of 2020, **São Paulo, Brazil** and **UNHCR** launched a joint Standard Operational Protocol to guide assistance to the transgender migrant and refugee community whose vulnerabilities were exacerbated by COVID-19, including the provision of food, information and safe spaces.

25. **Fight human trafficking with a *balance* of enforcement, against traffickers, and protection and assistance** for the women, men and children that the traffickers exploit. For example, one State representative observed that COVID-time has revealed the importance of new or expanded partnerships to improve anti-trafficking cooperation across borders, from more effective communication among law enforcement officers to development of digital systems. Participants commended the Memorandum of Understanding between **Indonesia** and the **UAE** on trafficking.

26. Strengthen protection of migrants and their family members with **stronger consular mechanisms and in inter-governmental agreements** at all levels.
    a. **bilateral labour agreements and cooperation** between countries of origin and employment must step up insistence on basic worker rights and protection in line with international human rights and labour standards for all migrant workers, at all skills levels, including for workers commonly excluded by national legislation regarding farm, seasonal and domestic work, and others in the informal economy.
    b. **existing mobility agreements** throughout Africa and elsewhere need to be implemented and/or duplicated, within regions (like **ECOWAS** in West Africa) and continentally, including wider ratification and domestication of the **Africa** *Protocol on Free Movement of Persons.*
    c. **closer and more systematic cross-border and regional cooperation** on the protection of children and youth on the move and victims of human trafficking, including referral to essential services and solutions, and prosecution of those who exploit them.
    d. **wider ratification and implementation** is due for relevant international conventions and standards, including the 1990 **International Convention on Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families** and ILO **Convention 189** on domestic workers.

27. **Recognize vulnerabilities as more relevant than categories.** A number of participants across States, civil society, business and city representatives suggested that to be effective, protection and other policies and programmes should be framed around the real-world *similarity* in vulnerability and opportunity among migrants and refugees on the ground, rather than their categorical dissimilarity. Participants were also clear that all people on the move have human rights, including to protection of those rights, with refugees having additional—and essential—rights to specific protection under the **Refugee Convention**.

28. **Support cities and local municipalities with resources** that correspond to the scale of their migrant and refugee populations so they can succeed in addressing gaps in migrant protection, working in partnership with international donors as well as other sources of public and private finance.

For example, **the Open Society Foundations** committed USD $133.7 million to combat devastation in the wake of coronavirus, prioritizing funding through public-private partnerships to support city governments in both response and recovery.[5] A substantial portion of the funding was for urban immigrant and undocumented families, low-wage workers, domestic workers, caregivers, and those in the informal and gig economies who are at greatest risk from the pandemic, including direct, one-time emergency relief payments to up to 20,000 immigrant families in **New York City.**

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[5] https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/our-emergency-response-to-covid-19

29. Significantly **increase investment in better data *for protection* and systems of communication**, to understand the true presence, need and contributions of migrants and refugees, and share information with them. Data on what drives migrants to take the kinds of risks that put them in situations of vulnerability is urgently needed.

    City leaders in particular pointed to the lack of data about the number and needs of newly arriving migrants and refugees, even internal migrants from rural areas or in conflict. This impedes the cities and other local actors, including civil society and business organizations, from responding to those migrants and refugees with essential services, from health care and education to employment opportunities and justice.

    During the pandemic, **Australia** increased interactive communication with multi-cultural communities in more than 8,000 engagements between March and September 2020, building both its own information and the capacity of communities to respond to the pandemic.

30. **Incentivize transitions from the informal to formal employment and economies**, or else it will not happen. A menu of incentives should be developed, including significantly more regular pathways, regularization programmes for migrant workers and their family members, access to capital, entrepreneurship training and benefits matching.

31. **Recall, restore and resource the essential contribution of *multilateral* action.** For many of these or other actions to succeed, "multi-stakeholder" is not enough; action must also be multi-*lateral,* including within:
    a. action-oriented regional and global groups and processes, as already described above
    b. targeted, practical frameworks. States, business and other participants emphasized the GFMD-inspired **Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative**, ILO's **General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment**, the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.** These frameworks directly address gaps in protection of migrants of all kinds, with *menus of solutions* in real-world contexts of human and economic development.

32. Finally, **recognize that these solutions may be "the missing link" to improve public narratives** on migrants, refugees and migration.

    Participants in the twelve regional GFMD meetings saw the COVID crisis opening peoples' eyes in many countries to the essential role and contributions migrants provide there every day: a moment for a possible *paradigm shift* in public perception and narratives. It was suggested that all of these actions here concretely help to change public perceptions and narratives on migrants— especially things like greater pathways and regularization that reduce irregular migration and status, and recognition of migrants and refugees not only as essential workers but as creators themselves of enormous numbers of jobs and businesses. Participants expressed appreciation for the **new GFMD Working Group on Narratives,** a multi-actor partnership led by **Canada, Ecuador** and the **Mayors Mechanism.**

V. Guiding questions

Participants in this Roundtable are invited to consider and exchange upon the following three questions:

1. **What are the gaps,** in general and especially during the COVID-19 crisis, in the protection of migrants: in transit; in processes of admission and inclusion, including access to social services and justice, and portability of benefits; in labour agreements and the informal economy, and in return to the country of origin?

2. **Concretely how are States, civil society, businesses and cities addressing** these gaps in protection, or how can they, including on the basis of shared interest, common ground, and in different types of partnerships?
3. Which of those practices and partnerships have value to consider **not only for responding within the COVID-related crises, but for recovering from them,** and for sustainable development longer-term?