

# **GFMD Review 2018**

## **Ten Years of GFMD: Lessons Learnt and Future Perspectives**

## I. Executive Summary

The GFMD was created at a time, in 2006, when the very idea of discussing migration at the United Nations was contentious. Over its first decade of operation, it has helped to lift migration onto the international agenda, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, and to forge a global consensus on a comprehensive set of migration-related policy objectives and targets, enshrined in the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. Is it time, then, for the GFMD to pronounce its “mission accomplished”?

This ten-year review of the GFMD set out to assess the Forum’s outputs and contributions to the global dialogue on migration and development, and to national level policy development and implementation, with a view to assessing the continued value and relevance of the process. Results of a survey and consultations with GFMD participating States, civil society and business suggest that the GFMD has continued relevance and, in fact, faces heightened expectations for the future, including for support to the implementation, follow-up and review of the GCM.

As it opens this next chapter and considers its future role, the GFMD will have to navigate a more crowded migration and development space and negotiate its relationship with the architecture or ecosystem that is emerging to support the GCM – the International and Regional Migration Review Fora, the UN Migration Network and the Capacity Building Mechanism. There is some degree of uncertainty in its operating environment as these new mechanisms begin to form and become fully operational. While the pieces around it begin to settle, the GFMD can “hit the ground running”. It should seize the space created by the GCM to experiment with new ways of working and formats of engagement.

States value the GFMD as a venue for networking, where they can forge partnerships and learn about policies and good practices. It has provided governments with an informal and malleable space to discuss sensitive topics, share challenges they are facing, and develop a common understanding and narrative regarding the complex interlinkages between migration and development. The GFMD has developed a large body of substance – including policy recommendations on migration and development that have shaped the global consensus in the SDGs, the New York Declaration and the GCM – and the largest repository of good practices from around the world, catalogued on the Platform for Partnerships (PfP). The GFMD has also provided a venue for, and increasing space for interaction with, stakeholders from civil society and business to discuss policies and practices that enable the development benefits and mitigate the risks of migration.

While it has largely thrived on informality, the GFMD also suffers from some resulting structural weaknesses. It has repeatedly struggled to secure a succession of Chairs and continues to rely on a bare-bones Support Unit. Its financial support has come from a small share of participating States that have begun to reduce their contributions in recent years. Decisions made, such as on a long-term financing model or the rotation of members on the GFMD Steering Group, are difficult to enforce. Furthermore, constituents have criticized the GFMD as a still too formal and discussion-only format, lacking “teeth” when it comes to following up on its outcomes. Its agenda is seen as skewed towards addressing migration over development policy concerns while shortchanging normative considerations. Stakeholders remain largely siloed in the GFMD process with demands growing for more interaction. Civil society, in particular, is seeking greater inclusion in all aspects of the Forum.

Going forward, the GFMD should play to its strengths while seeking to address its weaknesses. This is all the more important as it faces an increasingly challenging political environment. Many governments are reassessing their commitment to multilateralism. Unilateral and transactional approaches to international cooperation on migration and development are on the rise. The GFMD, too, will likely be measured increasingly by whether it produces tangible results that serve States’ immediate national interests. An area where States are looking for progress and the GFMD could facilitate practice-sharing is integration, with receiving countries, in particular, expecting migrants to integrate and participate in society.

An increasing securitization of migration – sometimes based on legitimate concerns, e.g. related to the involvement of organized crime in facilitating movements – limits the space for a development-oriented approach that acknowledges and seeks to enhance benefits for migrants and societies. At the same time, development actors that have been difficult to get to the table in the past, are now paying attention as they are being called upon to solve migration problems. This could provide new opportunities to engage this

constituency. The GFMD could also play a bridging role between the migration and refugee communities, as the bifurcation of the New York Declaration into a Global Compact on Refugees and a Global Compact for Migration leaves questions and coordination challenges when it comes to (large) mixed movements of people.

Progress in the coming years will mean keeping channels of communication and dialogue open. But it also, and critically, means generating action to make a tangible difference in the lives of migrants, diaspora communities and the societies they leave and join. Implementation of the commitments made in the SDGs and the GCM hinges on voluntary action and cooperation by States and other stakeholders.

The GFMD has always been carried by a small circle of committed governments that have brought along a larger circle of interested governments. It has been one of the prime engines of progress in the migration space, based on the principle of peer-to-peer motivation, learning, and cooperation. As the GCM enters the implementation phase, the GFMD has a catalytic role to play. It is and will remain a voluntary format. As such, the GFMD first and foremost provides a space for those governments and stakeholders who want to take action, have good practices to share, are eager to learn, and seek cooperation with others. In a difficult political climate, it can offer proponents of safe, regular and orderly migration a venue for peer support among like-minded governments and other stakeholders. At the same time, as an informal process, it leaves the door open for technical level exchanges even when the politics around migration are fraught.

Many States continue to see the core function of GFMD in providing an informal space for dialogue and networking where sensitive issues can be tackled and trust is built in the process. At the same time, the review tabled a number of other functions that States and stakeholders see for the GFMD: an expanded role in facilitating the formation of (multi-stakeholder) partnerships to support GCM implementation; a new role, emerging from the GCM, as a platform for reviewing progress in GCM implementation; and a role as a central hub for the exchange of data and knowledge and for supporting learning and capacity development.

The recommendations in this report envision the GFMD of the future with three distinct spaces, respectively dedicated to Policy, Partnerships, and Peer-Review. These spaces would structure GFMD activities at the Summit and throughout the year, straddling both online and offline (in-person) interactions. All three spaces are proposed to include a mix of both, governments-only and multi-stakeholder interactions. They should be designed to activate five critical levers that have the potential to improve migration and development policy making and generate better outcomes for migrants and societies. These are:

- 1) Data and knowledge to anticipate trends, appreciate the impacts of migration on sustainable development and vice versa, assess policies and measure progress towards agreed objectives in the SDGs and the GCM.
- 2) Cooperation across sectors to foster a holistic understanding and whole-of-government approach to migration and development.
- 3) Decentralization to promote problem-oriented and outcome-driven approaches at all level of governance – be it global, regional, bilateral, national or local – depending on where an issue can best be addressed.
- 4) Collective action by diverse stakeholders, including migrants, to harness their diverse mandates, expertise, resources, networks and lived experiences.
- 5) Capacities to actively facilitate and moderate integrated approaches that are evidence-based, multi-sector, multi-level and multi-stakeholder.

There is more than one way of putting these pieces together. This report's recommendations present an ambitious scenario for the future of the GFMD, based on the feedback received from its stakeholders. Realizing this ambitious vision will require revisiting the "infrastructure" that sustains the Global Forum, and it will have resource implications. Yet, even a scenario that keeps the GFMD close to its status quo will require investment in its capacities to live up to new tasks arising from the GCM. This includes considering closer cooperation and synergies with the emerging UN structures that support the Compact, at the heart of which sits IOM.

## Recommendations

To deepen policy dialogue and policy coherence through the GFMD, we propose the introduction of more continuous formats for technical discussions. Options could include either:

- **Establish sector-specific networks** that facilitate consultations among key ministries and agencies (e.g. interior, labour, social affairs, and development) on a voluntary and regular basis to foster understanding

among officials that are not usually involved in international cooperation, and to encourage inter-ministerial communication ahead of GFMD Summits and a more holistic approach to national policy-making on migration and development.

- **Establish issue-specific, multi-stakeholder working groups** that are State-led but include other relevant stakeholders, to give sustained attention to difficult policy questions, for example the issue of mixed migration.

Further, we propose a more systematic insourcing of research results into GFMD policy discussions:

- **Create a dedicated window for interaction with the research community** (think tanks, academia) – online, at SG and FOF meetings, and during GFMD Summits – giving researchers a chance to present and provide analysis of important findings and trends, while allowing governments and others to ask questions and discuss policy implications.

To facilitate the formation of implementation partnerships, we propose that the GFMD use new formats of engagement to help with match-making among governments and other stakeholders and to support the formation of problem-driven and outcome-oriented partnerships at different levels of governance.

- **Establish a solutions-driven “marketplace” to match potential partners:** The GFMD could provide an online and in-person marketplace for governments and other stakeholders who have a specific solution or tools that they are willing to share (e.g. to facilitate a bilateral labour migration agreement or local immigration integration) in order to help others develop their own solutions.
- **Support the formation of outcome-oriented partnerships through Migration Labs:** Building on the Migration Lab pilot that was undertaken during the German-Moroccan GFMD Co-Chairmanship, the GFMD could seek to forge a partnership for the replication of Migration Labs tailored to solving problems in specific regional, national and local contexts.

To support learning and the review of progress towards the GCM and the SDGs, including GFMD reporting to the IMRF and HLPF, a standing format is needed both, during the Government Days and the Common Space.

- **Introduce a peer-review space into the GFMD:** The review could be organized thematically, around clusters of GCM objectives, as well as around cross-cutting implementation and review challenges, such as developing and financing national GCM implementation plans, exploring various partnership models, and the development and testing of indicators for measuring progress. The latter issues may require more in-depth and continued discussion, e.g. in the form of a working group or Lab.
- **Develop an online “Learning Hub”** that would absorb the existing online Platform for Partnerships (PPF) and improve upon it by a) introducing “quality control” criteria for good practices and, potentially offering States and others who have submitted practices the opportunity to access evaluation services; and b) developing more interactive tools for online knowledge sharing, such as online communities of practice, tutorials and online learning courses.

To broaden ownership of the GFMD, create incentives to contribute and take up the chairmanship, and improve the overall “user experience” of the process, we propose that the GFMD:

- **Introduce state-of-the-art facilitation techniques** at the GFMD Summit and in other meeting formats by insourcing outside professional expertise to offer GFMD focal points and/or participants a chance to learn facilitation skills as a professional development opportunity embedded in the GFMD process with a view to subsequently engaging their skills in the GFMD process.
- **Reduce the frequency of GFMD Summit meetings:** With the creation of the Regional and International Migration Review Fora, it could be considered to hold the GFMD Summit meeting only every second year, so that it alternates with the RMRFs and IMRF.
- **Extend the GFMD Chairmanship to two years:** If the frequency of Summit meetings is reduced, it might be feasible to extend the Chairmanship periods to straddle both, a non-Summit and a Summit year. Alternatively, countries could also opt for a co-chairmanship arrangement covering two years and a jointly organized Summit meeting.
- **Introduce the option of a Geneva-based GFMD Summit:** The GFMD could gradually transition to a permanent presence in Geneva by giving governments the option to organize the annual Summit there, which would significantly reduce the costs of holding the Chairmanship.

- **Create designated oversight structures for Partnerships and Review:** The Steering Group should consider tasking individual members or specific groups, such as the ad hoc Working Group on the 2030 Agenda and GCM, to take responsibility for overseeing the GFMD's enhanced role in promoting partnerships and facilitating a meaningful review of progress towards agreed commitments.
- **Differentiate the Steering Group and Friends of the Forum meetings:** The profile of the SG could be raised by cultivating it as a Group of Friends, enrolling the network of former GFMD Chairs to help curate informal meetings at the Ambassadorial/Director General level. The frequency of FOF meetings could be reduced to twice a year, featuring a more substantive agenda, for example by inviting expert presentations or facilitating a dialogue among stakeholders.
- **Strengthen the system of GFMD focal points** by asking States to designate a Technical Committee on Migration and Development (TCMD) composed of relevant government agencies that would provide a broader interface for the GFMD and a motor for action on migration and development nationally, including by seeking actively to promote partnerships and cooperation with other States.

To put the GFMD on a more stable financial basis, we propose the following short-term actions:

- **Undertake the outstanding review of the GFMD Long-term Financing Framework** that was scheduled for 2017, to take stock of progress made in achieving the objectives of the Financing Framework, identify bottlenecks, and assess the GFMD's financing needs going forward, including alternative avenues for resource mobilization.
- **Leverage special initiatives and new formats to generate income** outside the regular GFMD budget, which could, however, support core GFMD functions such as knowledge management by generating overhead for the Support Unit. A special project could be, for instance, the replication of the Migration Lab format.
- **Expand in-kind contributions from all participating States** as well as other GFMD stakeholders – e.g. the shouldering of travel costs, seconding experts, hosting meetings, or providing professional services and expertise (knowledge management, meeting facilitation) – to broaden ownership and reduce the financial needs of the Forum.
- **Use incentives, such as matching funds, to broaden the circle of GFMD contributors:** Longtime funders of the GFMD could incentivize others to contribute by offering at least a share of their financial support in the form of matching funds that are unlocked only if other governments and stakeholders, such as large INGOs and businesses, make contributions as well.

Over the next couple of years, the GFMD will need to assess, if a more fundamental overhaul of its financing model is needed.

- **Explore the introduction of an annual fee for all GFMD-participating States** based on country income classification (high-income countries pay the most, low-income countries the smallest annual contribution) and, possibly, membership of the decision-making ranks within the GFMD, i.e. members of the Steering Group could face enhanced responsibilities in terms of membership fees and an obligation to pay on time or be suspended from the SG.
- **Carefully plan a possible transition to membership fees:** A stopgap measure may be required to facilitate the testing of and transition to a new financing model. To this end, the GFMD could ask donor countries that have provided it with significant financial support over the last decade to continue doing so while a new system of membership fees is being tested and rolled-out.

To enable the GFMD Support Unit to deliver a growing range of functions, and to do it well:

- **Strengthen the GFMD Support Unit**, starting with reviewing its actual scope of work, adequately classifying posts, and addressing additional capacity needs to support knowledge management as well as outreach and communications, in particular.
- **Revisit the relationship between the Support Unit and IOM** to ensure the SU receives the operational support it requires, and to clearly define its relationship with the UN Migration Network, in particular as regards cooperation, and potentially joint staffing, for the CBM. As it becomes clearer how the GFMD will fit with the rest of the emerging GCM architecture, States may in due course wish to consider further integrating the Support Unit with the IOM.