

## GLOBAL FORUM on MIGRATION and DEVELOPMENT

Good practices in engaging non-governmental actors in migration related development policies.

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The present contribution is informed by experience, acquired through a close collaboration with civil society: The Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI) is a 4 year programme funded by the European Commission and implemented by the UNDP in partnership with IOM, UNHCR, UNFPA & ILO. Adopting a bottom-up approach, the JMDI funds 51 small-scale organizations in their efforts towards linking migration and development, and aims at identifying good practices to be shared at the local and international level with all relevant actors. JMDI's Handbook *Migration for development: a bottom-up approach* is the culmination of this process.

### **What is the added value of non-governmental actors?**

Context specific knowledge: Non-governmental actors enjoy a certain proximity to local contexts (physical presence in the field, mutual understanding rooted in shared cultural traits, etc.) and have a good understanding of real needs, values, interests, and achievable goals. In Georgia, local authorities were involved in a JMDI-funded project which aim was to promote the efforts of local authorities to connect local communities with Georgians abroad in support of local community economic development. Their collaboration with the project partners allowed local authorities to better understand the needs of their citizens, and improve their participation in local decision-making processes. **Policymakers, at a local and national level, need to collaborate with non-governmental actors to obtain contextual evidence necessary to formulate and implement pertinent M&D policies.**

Technical expertise: Through their projects and interventions, non-governmental actors possess experience and established knowledge in specific areas. A JMDI-funded project in Georgia sought to promote the reintegration of qualified returnees into the Georgian Labour Market. The partners involved mapped actors working in the migration sphere at national level, which allowed them to be involved in relevant meetings and conferences. Partners met with the ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia and members of the National Parliament. Partners boosted their visibility vis-à-vis influential actors in the M&D marketplace, and the latter are likely to call upon partners to contribute to the migration policy debate in the country, because of their particular expertise in this area. **Policymakers should draw upon the specific expertise and experience of non-governmental actors to complement their own efforts. Non-governmental actors can share new information and data, project results and lessons learned.**

Innovative policies: Non-governmental actors possess insight into specific issues that might not be addressed through larger development frameworks (bilateral, regional, multilateral). For example, a JMDI-funded project in Sri Lanka aimed at improving financial literacy among remittance senders/recipients and to expand formal financial services to channel and invest remittances. The partners involved worked with different actors, including key institutional actors such as the Central Bank of Sri Lanka or the Ministry of Finance. The partners shared with these entities evidence and recommendations to improve existing remittance policy frameworks in Sri Lanka. In particular, partners

documented the deficiencies of the financial sector and proposed to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka innovative financial products for remittance recipients (e.g. rechargeable remittance cards). Partner organizations are likely to be involved in future developments of the remittance sector in Sri Lanka. **Cooperation with non-governmental actors can guide policymakers towards innovative and interesting policies that might have escaped them otherwise.**

**At what point of the development and policy planning processes should non-governmental actors be involved?**

A process of mainstreaming is essential to integrate migration into development strategies. For this mainstreaming to be successful and sustainable, a broad national ownership is necessary. **Non-governmental actors, such as migrants or diaspora organizations (including the vulnerable groups such as irregular migrants or women) should be involved in all stages of the development planning and policy formulation process:** formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation. Mainstreaming should be based on consultations with/participation of non-governmental actors in a **meaningful way** for each phase of the strategy development cycle. Civil society can be involved in broader development planning consultations or in working groups focusing specifically on M&D.

**Forms of collaboration between non-governmental partners actors and policymakers.**

Through lobbying activities, such as communication campaigns, non-governmental actors can establish a dialogue with policymakers and share project results, data and research findings. **It is more beneficial to be positive and constructive during these lobbying activities than just critical.**

Policymakers can also be involved in project events or directly in project management, consultation and monitoring and/or decision making processes. For example, two JMDI projects in Moldova established “project advisory groups” or “steering committees”, in which local and national authorities were represented. The aim of these structures was to share project findings with government institutions and influence the policies addressing the impacts of migration on vulnerable households left behind. **Policymakers should facilitate face-to-face encounters with non-governmental actors as well as virtual networking and exchange, to encourage the further participation civil society in development planning processes. Putting up these mechanisms of mutual exchange will require time and a long-term commitment.**

**Difficulties with the collaboration of non-governmental and governmental actors, potentially hindering exchanges:**

- Unfavorable or restraining political contexts;
- Political changes leading to leadership changes;
- Policymakers’ busy agendas may make their participation inconsistent or hard to secure;
- Inherent difficulties to sensitive issues (such as undocumented migration, etc.);
- Non-governmental actors often have to be legally recognized to be seen as legitimate interlocutors in policymaking processes.

**For further information, please refer to the key recommendations brought together at the end of JMDI’s handbook *Migration for development: a bottom-up approach*.**