

GFMD 2020 Regional Webinars
Opening Plenary for African Union-English 12 May 2020

Theme 4 : Addressing Gaps in Migrant Protection/Bingham

Introduction

I'd like to thank our leaders from the UAE and African Union, with appreciation to the Support Unit too. It's a pleasure to be here with the "two Michelles", and representatives of States, civil society, business, Mayors, regional and international organizations. We are the right mix!

But actually, more than "representatives", the Global Forum gathers us as *practitioners*. As every-day *solution-seekers* and *partners*. These webinars are not "work-shops", they're "partner-shops".

And over the *years*, what partners in the GFMD have found—and agreed—is that: migration and development together point to many solutions. For example: during Global Forum Common Space a few years ago, IOM Director General Bill Swing said: "Risks to *migrants* are risks to development." Strong consensus on that then pointed to the obvious solution: *protection* of migrants is also protection of *development*.

That's what we're looking at in this theme this year. With a *solutions* approach.

I. You chose the theme "Addressing Gaps in Migrant Protection". It has 3 focus areas:

1. Protection of migrants **in transit**
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**

For each of those three, we will have 3 discussion questions:

Question 1. In *your* country or region, what **2 or 3 gaps** in migrant protection are of greatest concern to States, civil society, business and mayors, *and where do you see shared interest and common ground to tackle those gaps jointly?*

Question 2. What **existing practices, and what partnerships** involve one or more States, civil society, business and city actors at filling such gaps?

Question 3. What **2 or 3 next steps can be taken, and by whom**, especially at regional, national and local levels?

A "Starter Paper" that includes these 3 focus areas and questions is in the webinar documents and on-line. It's 4 sides. I'm not going to read it; just a few words *about* it.

1. After a brief **introduction, Section II** of the paper considers the extraordinary COVID 19-related dynamics around GFMD work and issues this year. **Section III** then expands each of the 3 focus areas of the theme, with examples of **gaps** in protection that are widely cited and an invitation to States and other GFMD partners to discuss **which** of those gaps, or others, **you** think are most important. Finally, **instead of the paper** suggesting practices and partnerships that *address* those gaps, **Section IV asks GFMD partners—you—to do that**, with the guiding questions emphasizing **joint action. So that's your job, next Tuesday** in the *breakout* session but **also on-line between sessions: to suggest concrete practices and partnerships that address gaps in migrant protection.**
2. **The goal is to see and build solutions.** *We* (you, me and the other regions) will work on this together all year. You are the thinker-actors; I am the listener-writer.

II. Why *this*, why *us* in the GFMD, and why *now*?

1. A great **range of protection** is spelled out in widely ratified international treaties and standards that are many, practical and binding, including core human rights conventions, the 1951 Refugee Convention, the International Protocols on human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and ILO conventions and labour standards.

2. **Gaps** in protection are *also* many—but **not all gaps are universal or unfillable**.
3. The GFMD emphasizes that **addressing** gaps in migrant protection **both fulfills human and labour rights, and promotes development**.
4. So **filling** protection gaps creates development opportunities **and solutions**.
5. **This subject has been a priority** in both UN High Level Dialogues on International Migration and Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN High-level Meeting on Refugees and Migrants, and the two Global Compacts. These have included declarations, resolutions and *menus of solutions* that States adopted *either* unanimously *or* with near-universal consensus.
6. Many **regions, States, businesses and cities have elaborated further** migrant rights and protections.
7. In many respects, **progress** has been clear, if at times slow and inconsistent.

8. **But what is this moment**, and how does it relate to addressing the gaps in protection of migrants?
9. The world is experiencing **not one but twin crises** that are **fully global**: the COVID 19 pandemic sweeping the globe almost region by region, and an economic crisis born of measures to combat that pandemic.
10. The Global Forum is **not limited to consideration of COVID 19-related phenomena alone**, but they are **precisely** the kind of concerns that the GFMD has taken up over the years. Indeed, the twin pandemic and economic crises touch directly across a **wide range** of migration and development.
11. The need for **protection** in these crises **affects everyone, not only migrants**. **However**, direct reports and data show **migrants** experiencing **some** effects of the two crises **disproportionately**.
12. **And no one should underestimate** what may emerge as one of the most historic, and global, waves of xeno-anxiety and hostility ever directed at foreigners, **if** these next months and years see **chronic and widespread unemployment, hunger, financial stress and other fall-out** from the **economic** crisis.

13. At a global webinar on COVID 19 that the UAE Chair organized April 28th, Swiss Ambassador Pietro Mona urged that the GFMD and others consider migrants not simply as vulnerable and victims in this moment, but as **“part of solutions... part of the recovery”** from the two crises.
14. There may also be **seeds, if not early signs, of a possible paradigm shift in that direction**. Among other things, in a number of countries of the north, south, east and west, migrants are **suddenly being seen not only as essential workers, but as an essential part of a range of solutions needed to recover**.
15. Just three snapshots of **migrants in solutions**:
 - a. Migrants make enormous **financial contributions** to economies and development, often in two countries. In countries **where they live and work**, migrants contribute the immense value of their labour itself, **plus spending or investing about 80%** of what they earn there. According to the World Bank, migrants send the other 20% across borders as **remittances**—globally some US \$ 689 billion in 2018. Most goes to migrant countries of **origin**, where it is often a significant part of GDP, greatly exceeds foreign aid funding, directly supports individual economic activity and healthcare, and provides many the **choice to not** migrate.
 - b. Migrants **create businesses and jobs**. For example, in 2014 the Financial Times reported that migrants launched 1 out of 7 **businesses** in the UK, creating nearly 1 out of 7 British **jobs**. The Wall Street Journal noted similar numbers for migrant-created businesses in the US. Between direct hiring and knock-on employment generated in other businesses, one headline said simply **“More Immigrants, More Jobs.”**
 - c. Migrants do **essential work in jobs of existential value to everyone**, from families and cities to businesses and countries, at all skills levels, permanent and structurally seasonal. **“Existential value”** means health care in hospitals, other institutions and homes; farming and food services, including its distribution and sale; public transportation; even construction.
16. It is no accident that the **Forum is about not just migrants and migration, but also development**.
17. To emerge from today’s crises, **and** for the future, **HOW will we “build back better”—with migrants fully part of solutions—and protected? THAT’S our work together this year**: States, civil society, businesses and Mayors.

/Thank you.