



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



United Nations
Network on Migration
Working Better Together



Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab region

Day 2 – Thursday, 25 February

Roundtable 3

GCM objective 14: Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle	GCM objective 15: Provide access to basic services for migrants	GCM objective 16: Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion
GCM objective 19: Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries	GCM objective 20: Promote faster, safer & cheaper transfer of remittances & foster financial inclusion of migrants	GCM objective 22: Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits

1. Brief overview on the Objectives clustered under the respective Roundtable

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is based on the ambitious vision that migrants and migration can be powerful drivers for development in both societies of origin, transit and destination, which is fully in line with the recognition of the positive contributions of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To that end, the GCM outlined key objectives necessary to create conducive environments and appropriate mechanisms that enable migrants and diasporas to enrich societies through their human, economic and social capacities, and thus facilitate their financial and non-financial contributions to sustainable development at the local, national, regional and global levels. More specifically, the GCM calls for the empowerment of migrants with the full access to their rights and obligations as well as the provision of basic services and social protection as necessary conditions for their socio-economic integration, throughout the migration cycle. All of the above objectives and commitments cannot materialize without strong and effective partnerships and a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach as key guiding principles of the GCM among others. This roundtable will provide a space to further

discuss these ongoing challenges, share good practices on migrant access to basic services and national social protection systems and their contribution towards development, and explore effective ways to improve social cohesion and enhance the wellbeing of all people without exclusion or marginalization.

2. Short Background on why and how the objectives are relevant to the Arab region with evidence base

The search for better sources of livelihood, productive employment and decent work is a common driver of mobility both for migrants leaving and coming to the region. While some countries are characterized by the highest global share of migrant workers in the total workforce¹, others in the region have an important informal sector employing large numbers of low-skilled migrants often in irregular and very vulnerable situations. Objective 15 calls for a non-discriminatory and migrant-inclusive approach in the provision of basic services, notably health and education, while it depends on a wide range of criteria including gender, level of income and legal status. The access to these services remains limited for migrants, partly due to stigma and discrimination, lack of national policies and plans to include migrants, migrant-friendly services, or resources and capacity. In addition, migrants in irregular situations might fear reprisals if they interact with government authorities and hence avoid resorting to public services, which has a particular serious impact on their health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ensuring universal health coverage, which is an integral component of basic services, has also proven essential during the COVID-19 response for achieving positive health outcomes for the whole of society, given the fact that infectious diseases do not discriminate between migrants and nationals. In addition, non-communicable diseases prevention and treatment as well as mental health and psychosocial support services are also essential to the provision of continuum of care that is also intrinsic to universal health coverage. Furthermore, considering the specific needs and challenges of women and child migrants, is of critical importance particularly as cultural and social norms can further hinder access to services in the region. The pandemic has exacerbated

¹ Reaching over 90 per cent in the private sector in some GCC countries.

already disadvantaged conditions of low skilled women migrant workers, especially in irregular situations, and their access to basic services. The pandemic is also resulting in widening gaps in migrant children's access to education, who may see additional barriers of accessing online education. Reduced access to services may have implications in terms of children protection – with increase in negative coping mechanisms, such as child labour and child marriage incidences among vulnerable populations. On the other side, the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the criticality of the many essential services and numerous contributions by migrants to countries' crisis-response efforts, notably by supporting the continuity of essential businesses and sectors as active members of society. This includes health, agriculture, transport, services and food-processing industries. Objectives 16 and 19 hold the promise that improved socio-economic integration creates a conducive environment for migrants to positively contribute to prosperity and development in their origin and destination countries. With further exploration of migrant and diaspora investments and entrepreneurship as well as creation of strong diaspora networks, countries of origin will be able to channel and benefit from migrants' participation when appropriately integrated into development and sectoral policies. Nonetheless, as estimated 1.7 million jobs were lost in the Arab region due to the pandemic, migrants often fell into dire situations first, as their employers struggled to pay salaries, provide safe accommodation and sufficient food due to the economic shocks. Enhanced consular protection, assistance and cooperation, as promoted by Objective 14, became particularly important as many migrants remained stranded abroad or forcibly returned. A number of migrants who lost jobs had to resort to migrant and diaspora organizations as well as other international and non-governmental organizations for emergency support to survive the impact of the multilayered shocks. Furthermore, as a consequence, remittances from the region, which constitutes for many a critical source of income for households, are expected to sharply decline. This is particularly true with the concomitance of the effects of the pandemic with the collapse of oil prices in most important remittance sending countries, with remittances flows expecting to fall by 8 per cent in the Arab region. UNICEF simulation exercise indicates that the COVID-19 crisis could lead to additional 12 million children in the Arab region to experience poverty in several well-being dimensions in the short term. Children of migrant workers, left behind, in countries of origin,

experience reduction of remittances or delays in remittances or potentially longer separation periods from their migrant parents. Children left behind may not be immediately included in social assistance schemes as they may have not met eligibility criteria due to remittance associated family income prior to the pandemic, and systems may lack flexibility to capture “the new poor”. The current context underlines the importance of the commitments made in Objective 20 to reduce remittance transfer costs to maximize the volume of remittances received by migrants’ families, their children and communities. Moreover, countries of origin expected to be severely impacted by the large flows of returnees to already saturated labour markets, which have also been severely impacted by COVID-19. In the Arab region, analysis of social protection measures used in the context of COVID-19 indicates pertinent barriers for migrants to access to national social protection schemes, especially informal workers and non-nationals. As a large number of migrants are returning home after many years of working abroad, and more are falling into vulnerable situation while remaining in the destination countries in the context of pandemic, portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits and improved access to social protection in the destination through an establishment or maintaining non-discriminatory national social protection systems, including social protection floors for nationals and migrants as called for by Objective 22, will be of crucial importance.

3. Guiding questions

All guiding questions should be assessed through the prism of the GCM’s guiding principles, particularly through the whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, whilst also being gender-responsive and child-sensitive.

- What are some of the good practices identified that enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic? (Objective 14)
- What are some of the key challenges identified with regards to ensuring equitable and inclusive access for migrants to basic services? How could countries ensure that all migrants, regardless of their legal status, have access to COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccination? What are the best practices for increasing migrant usage of healthcare

services and discouraging stigmatization/discrimination against migrants that have tested positive for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases contracted in the country of destination? How best can service-provision mechanisms be inclusive of migrants' needs including services for prevention and promotion, chronic diseases and mental health and psychosocial support services, considering the specific needs of women and child migrants? (Objective 15)

- What are some of the good practices identified at national or local level that support the mutual empowerment of migrants and/or local communities to realize migrants' socio-economic inclusion? (Objective 16)
- What actions or structures are in place to engage and empower migrants and diaspora communities to contribute to sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination? What are some of the obstacles that migrants and diaspora may still face in that respect? (Objective 19)
- What are the key challenges faced by migrants in sending or receiving remittances? How best to ensure that migrants are sufficiently included in digital and financial measures to foster the transfer of remittances at lower costs? What steps have been taken to facilitate the efficacy of money transfer providers and/or to reduce remittance transfer costs borne by migrants? (Objective 20)
- Do migrant workers have access to social protection in their destination and benefit from the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits on return to their countries of origin? Does this access apply to migrant workers at all skills levels? How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted access to social protection? What are some good practices in the region related to inclusion of migrants, regardless of their status, in national social protection systems? (Objective 22)
- How have the private sector, trade unions and other stakeholders been engaged in addressing concerns of migrant workers? Has any progress been made in legal and policy frameworks regulating social protection rights for migrants in countries in the region? What are some of the key gaps that remain in this area? (Objective 22)

Resources

[Video](#): The Global Compact for Migration in a Nutshell

[UN Secretary-General Policy Brief](#): COVID-19 and People on the Move

[UN Network on Migration Statement](#): COVID-19 Does Not Discriminate; Nor Should Our Response

[UN Network on Migration Statement](#): International Day of Family Remittances: The Global Pandemic Highlights the Crucial Role of Remittances for Migrant Families

[ILO Common interests, shared goals](#): Promoting decent work from Asia and Africa to the Middle East Background Paper to the Interregional Consultation on Labour Migration and Mobility from Asia and Africa to the Middle East

[ILO Labour mobility between Asia and the Arab States](#): Sharing of Experiences and Progress under the Bali Declaration with specific focus on women migrant workers

ILO Protecting migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, [Policy Brief](#), April 2020

[IOM International Migration Law N°32](#) - Glossary on Migration (Arabic)

[IOM Key Migration terms Arabic](#)

[IOM UNESCWA Situation Report on International Migration in the Arab Region 2019](#)

[Policy Brief](#): The Impact of COVID-19 on the Arab Region An Opportunity to Build Back Better

[UN Women](#) The impact of Covid 19 on Violence against Women and Girls in the Arab Region through the Lens of Women's Civil Society Organizations

[UNESCWA](#) COVID-19 Economic Cost to the Arab Region

[UNICEF Working paper](#): Family unity in the context of migration:

[WFP-IOM's joint publication 'Populations at Risk](#): Implications of COVID-19 for Hunger, Migration and Displacement'