



Inputs to the Secretary General's biennial report on the Global Compact on Migration: youth perspective

Background information

About the submitting entity:

The **United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY)** is the UN General Assembly-mandated official, formal and self-organised space for children and youth (aged below 30) to contribute to and engage in certain intergovernmental and allied policy processes at the UN since 1992. Our mission is to bridge children and youth and the UN system in order to ensure that their right to meaningful participation is realised. We do so on a voluntary-basis by engaging children and youth entities in formal and informal forms in the design, implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of sustainable development policies at all levels in four areas: Policy & Advocacy, Capacity Building, Youth Action and Knowledge. We have a specific Working Group on Migration which leads our engagement with the GCM process. You can read our latest impact report, here: <https://bit.ly/2VvaLyb>.

About the source for the content of this submission:

UNMGCY has conducted **extensive consultations with youth-led and youth-focused organizations** operating locally, nationally, or regionally in all parts of the world. In particular, the content of this submission comes from the consultations held at the Youth Forum held in conjunction with the XII Summit of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in Quito 2020 ([link](#)), a mapping of youth-led and youth-focused alternatives to child detention in Latin America, and a recent webinar we held about the effects of COVID on youth on the move.

Contact

For any questions please do not hesitate to contact our leadership at migrationgfp@unmgcy.org.

Inputs to the SG's Report

Progress in the implementation to the GCM has been slow at best. There has not been enough real commitment to protect and integrate migrants at the national and local levels, and we are witnessing the rise of misconception and xenophobic narratives on migrants. Migrants are facing infringements on their human rights, dangerous migration journeys, discrimination, xenophobia, and unequal access to services. Children and youth on the move specifically face enormous difficulties accessing and enrolling in education and inserting themselves in the labour market, given discrimination, exploitation, and lack of flexibility to recognize documentations. This is causing irreparable damage on the future of these generations.

As youth we find this unacceptable. We call on the Secretary General to include in his report that the ensuring migrants (including youth) are socially and economically integrated and that their human rights are respected is a prerequisite for migrants to - first - not be left behind and so for

the achievement of the 2030 Agenda to be possible, and - second - for them to significantly contribute with their own skills and work to the achievement of the SDGs in their host and home communities. This is why the GCM is so relevant and crucial.

In particular we call for the following points to be prioritized:

- Ensure all children and youth can attend school and higher education, independently of migratory status, by guaranteeing flexibility during the enrollment process (relaxing the bureaucratic requirements) and by providing targeted support through scholarships and language classes;
- Create flexibility to recognize degrees and certifications transnationally, adapting to difficult situations in migrants' home country;
- End child detention and ensure protection of young migrants.

We stand as allies to make these priorities into realities, with the incredible youth-led grassroots work we have identified through our consultations as testament.

1. What roles have civil society, local authorities, trade unions, the private sector and other stakeholders played with Member States in implementation and how did the UN system provide support?

Youth - both migrants and host communities members - are showing great leadership to tackle key issues faced by migrants. They are acting as leaders of their own formal or informal initiatives, they are collaborating and driving civil society responses as young professionals or volunteers, as well as doing their part of the private sector and local governments. We will summarize some key points and examples below and stand available to share more.

Youth are leaders of projects in the grassroots. For instance, regarding insertion in the labour market, youth have been leading skills-training, language classes, and legal capacity-building. *Choose Yourself*, a youth-led Rwandan NGO that empowers young migrant women to navigate the job market and avoid labour gender-based exploitation through legal and cultural capacity-building. Or *Migraflix* - a youth-led initiative in Brazil that trains migrants to become entrepreneurs and links with private sector companies to promote and identify buyers for the migrants' products and services.

Youth are also involved in creating informal networks of mutual support. For instance, *Venezolanas Globales* is a young women-led platform to share information and mutual support between members of the Venezuelan Diaspora. Or the *New Canadians Program*, which provides youth-led educational tutoring services for migrants and education for the host and migrant communities. Similar initiatives, especially on information sharing and facilitating access to formal and informal education are being led by youth all over the world.

Youth are also valuable contributors to multi-stakeholder projects, as young professionals and as

volunteers. For instance, they have been a driving force behind the Gambia's chapter of *Restoring Family Links*, a global project to coordinate the safe returning of migrants outlined to Geneva Conventions that is managed by the International Committee of the Red Cross with the support of IOM and national embassies.

Youth have also created spaces to consult on common challenges and exchange good practices between peers and then contributed to similar conversations with governments, the UN System, and other stakeholders. This includes the Youth Forums organized by UNMGCY, IOM, and UNICEF in conjunction with the GCM Adoption conference in Marrakech and the XII Summit of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in Quito 2020. There, priorities were identified, best practices were shared, and youth voices were then meaningfully included at the main conference. This is an excellent example of meaningful youth inclusion and participation in decision-making processes, which is now increasingly replicated at the regional and local levels. It is crucial that youth participation - meaningful and not tokenistic - is highly encouraged at all levels.

The inclusion of migrants is also paramount and makes initiatives much more likely to succeed. However this is still lacking in most instances. Inclusion (both in consultative and in leadership roles) has to be ensured at all decision-making and implementation levels - including grassroots, local authorities, civil society initiatives, and national government level.

Member States, the UN, and other stakeholders have all proven to be valued partners of these efforts. However, more efforts could be made to bridge the gaps between national governments and grassroots, and to support existing youth-led and migrants-led initiatives rather than only trying to include these populations in external stakeholders-led projects. This will lead to more successful initiatives, greater synergies, and more impact. Moreover, smart and flexible investment by all stakeholders in successful and promising grassroots initiatives, including those led by young nationals and migrants, is necessary for their impact to grow to serve more segments of the population.

2. The potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the progress made in implementing the GCM

The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent social and economic measures adopted as a response are having a tremendous negative impact on the current implementation of the GCM, undermining previous efforts, and with forecasted heavy repercussions. We conducted extensive consultations with youth and entities, and have identified key challenges young people on the move are currently facing because of the pandemic, which include:

- Migrants, and young ones in particular, are being disproportionately represented between the populations who are currently not counting on a job or unemployment

support from their employment or state. This is due to their greater representation within the informal and gig economies, vulnerability to exploitation by employers, and to the collapse of small entrepreneurial ventures and street selling.

- Young migrants are being left behind in their education as their families often lack access to internet, space, and the required technologies to attend classes like their peers. This is holding them back now and will result in increasing the education gap, future higher drop-out rates, and ultimately hindering significantly the socio-economic integration, putting us one step back.
- Increased vulnerabilities for migrant children and youth, including to family violence, sexual violence, mental health challenges, which are heightened by a lack of social network and support in their host country, and specifically in cases of detention, precarious living, camps, etc.
- With border control now being predominantly enforced as a preventive COVID measure, movements are restricted until further notice leaving people trapped in camp conditions, with precarious sanitary and health conditions.
- Lack of representation in decision-making processes and low prioritization of migrant populations by state-led responses, due to both discrimination and to migratory status, will affect poverty and health indicators and increase inequalities.
- Narratives on migration have significantly worsened in some regions, affecting integration, increasing community violence, and forcing dangerous returns (for instance at the Ecuador-Peru border against Venezuelans immigrants).