

## Youth Consultations in the MENA Region for the AU-GFMD Regional Meeting

In the vision for its Chairmanship of the [Global Forum on Migration and Development \(GFMD\)](#) over the course of 2020, the UAE sets out a commitment to fostering a yearlong process. To that end, the AUGFMD Regional Meetings have been proposed to take place in May 2020. These Regional Meetings are designed to encourage the incorporation of more local and regional perspectives into the background papers, for discussion by GFMD participants at the end-of-year Summit, as well as stimulating the formation of partnerships on relevant issues.

The United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY) led open MENA regional consultations with youth to incorporate their perspectives and priorities on three central themes. For this purpose, 20 youth and youth-led organizations were interviewed from across the MENA – operating in 6 countries, and representing over 16,000 young leaders in migration issues. The results of these consultations are summarized in the policy briefs contained in this document.

UNGCY's MENA Regional Focal Points then brought these key issues and voices to the AU-GFMD process. They participated and co-organized the civil society consultations prior to the AU-GFMD event. They will now participate in the main AU-GFMD Forum, representing in all breakout sessions in May and June, ensuring youth voices are heard at the highest levels and taken into consideration when identifying priorities and designing solutions.

For any questions or to be included in the mapped youth-focused and youth-led organizations and networks, please email [migrationgfp@unmgcy.org](mailto:migrationgfp@unmgcy.org).

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## **Fostering partnerships to realize migration-related goals in the Sustainable Development Agenda and managing the future of human mobility: *Policy Brief on Youth Perspectives in MENA Region.***

Promoting coordination and collaboration between different governments, civil society, and all stakeholders' efforts to achieve our shared goals is crucial in order to avoid duplication, improve efficacy, and better distribute resources. Following the GFMD Chair's recognition of "*Fostering partnerships to realize migration-related goals in the Sustainable Development Agenda and managing the future of human mobility*" as a priority theme, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) led an open MENA regional consultation on youth perspectives and priorities on this topic, for which we consulted 20 locally-based youth-led and youth-focused organizations with a national or international focus, acting in 6 countries, and representing 15,000 young leaders in migration issues. The results of these consultations are summarized in this policy brief.

### **Key Youth-Led and Youth-Focused Projects**

Youth organisations are at the forefront in fostering partnerships to include migrants in the achievement of the SDGs, including through:

- Promoting education and intercultural exchange through education mobility programs and exchange volunteering opportunities. .
- Providing quality education to children and youth from refugee and migrant backgrounds to ensure they are not left behind in the achievement of SDG4, including through after hours and in afternoon shifts and through innovative projects working directly with local communities in response to their needs. .
- Lobbying for policy reform, including for the abolition of outdated labour laws, for instance the Kafala system, and work to remove causes of vulnerability in migrant populations. .=
- Fostering social entrepreneurship led by young people, supporting them to develop business solutions and projects to leverage opportunities and support migrant communities .

### **Policy Recommendation for Government and Other Actors**

To achieve the SDGs by 2030 and ensure migrants are not left behind, partnerships are a not only a tool but a necessity. **Stakeholders, including those present in these consultations, should act as leaders in our countries of operation and work to align our goals and targets to the 2030 Agenda, as well as to invest resources in multi-stakeholder partnerships with rigorous monitoring and review.**

Grassroots organizations, including youth-led initiatives, are doing excellent work to include migrant populations in the achievement of the SDGs, and they also have specific knowledge of their beneficiary populations. However, they are often left behind in more important partnerships. **We call on governments, INGOs, and donors, to leverage the impact and added capacity of grassroots organizations by engaging them in direct partnerships and joint efforts.** As youth, we stand ready to partner with our initiatives.

Youth and children will be left behind if we do not address their priorities in a timely and effective manner, including ensuring continuity of education. **We call on governments to ensure that the priorities of young migrants and children are included in all development and policy plans, including education and labour market insertion.** As youth, we stand ready to share our lessons learnt and best practices, partner to make this a reality, and nominate young people to support in the design of inclusive policies and projects responsive to children and youth specific circumstances.

## **Leveraging technology to empower migrants: Policy Brief on Youth Perspectives in MENA Region.**

Technology can be a great asset to provide information, connection, and opportunities for migrants' populations, although this has not always been leveraged effectively. Recently, considering the COVID-19 pandemic, in the MENA region, a number of organizations have begun to utilize remote platforms and tools to engage their target groups, particularly young people. Following the GFMD Chair's recognition of "*Leveraging technology to empower migrants*" as a priority theme, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) led an open MENA regional consultation on youth perspectives and priorities on this topic, for which we consulted 20 locally-based youth-led and youth-focused organizations with a national or international focus, acting in 6 countries, and representing over 15.000 young leaders on migration issues. The results of these consultations are summarized in this policy brief.

### **Key Youth-led and Youth-Focused Projects**

The consulted organizations are implementing projects , including:

- Increase migrants' employability by providing them with skills-training (including on technological literacy and emerging technologies, such as blockchain) as well as innovation and entrepreneurship programs both online and in person. Engage young innovators, helping them to develop technical knowledge, soft and transferable skills, and access (remote) employment opportunities.
- Provide accessible educational opportunities for school-aged migrants and refugees, overcoming numerous barriers, through the use of online platforms.
- Provide young people with the necessary skills to create content on social media as a tool for self-expression. Ensure their specific needs are properly understood and addressed and they are empowered as agents of change, advocating for collective causes.
- Raise awareness and ensure access to information using technological solutions, for example, chat-bots to administer services and information to refugees, creating multilingual platforms providing information and raising awareness on issues that affect young migrants.
- Increase reach to migrant populations living in remote areas, through the enhanced use of information and communication technologies.

### **Policy Recommendation for Government and other actors**

With the raising importance of technology in the world and its potential to make education accessible for all, youth in the MENA region **call on stakeholders and relevant state institutions to leverage the power of technology and recognize the urgency of making sure that no child or young person misses out on their education because of their migratory status.** Therefore, it is a priority to ensure equal access to technology, online skills-building, and relevant information and communications technology solutions that optimize skills matching in labor markets. Platforms should be user-friendly, interactive, accessible, gender-responsive, and multilingual. Government and civil society must focus on supporting young migrants to access these opportunities, particularly in remote areas.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship creates opportunities for young people to be engaged and become part of the labor market, including through the creation of digital services offered locally or remotely. For this reason, youth are taking action and providing entrepreneurship education and opportunities. **We call on governments and other stakeholders to help us by investing in helping youth-led and youth-focused educational programmes scale.** , as well as invest in business incubators and qualified mentors that can support young people in their entrepreneurship journey and in establishing their own businesses.

All the services offered to the migrants either on the psycho-social, educational, or any other level can be delivered through using technology platforms. That makes it a priority to facilitate the migrants' access to the internet and to create safe online spaces with an adequate technological infrastructure that respects the privacy and online safety of users. **For this we advocate and encourage the private sector and donors to invest in and prioritize free access to mobile data and wifi service for migrants including groups at special risk.**

## **The Governance of Labour Migration in the Context of Changing Employment Landscapes: *Policy Brief on Youth Perspectives in MENA Region.***

Labour migration governance is a highly relevant topic for the MENA region, which is one of the world's biggest magnets for labour migration flows, especially towards the Arab States, but also for the outgoing flows from northern Africa heading mainly to Europe. Following the GFMD Chair's recognition of "*The Governance of Labour Migration in the context of changing employment landscapes*" as a priority theme, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) led an open MENA regional consultation on youth perspectives and priorities on this topic, for which we consulted 20 locally-based youth-led and youth-focused organizations with a national or international focus, acting in 6 countries, and representing over 15,000 young leaders in migration issues. The results of these consultations are summarized in this policy brief.

### **Key Youth-led and Youth-Focused Projects**

Youth organisations are at the forefront in the development of projects that support the governance of labour migration, such as:

- Provide information and legal support to young migrants on their labour rights, and advice on employment regulations.
- Organize spaces for exchange, such as Forums and seminars, where relevant stakeholders, experts, and youth leaders, can discuss evidence and good practices on labour mobility issues in the region.
- Empowering migrants through entrepreneurship and social innovation programs to increase their income and gain economic independence.
- Providing health services and educational opportunities for migrants that don't have access due to their migratory status or lack of migration sensitive services.

### **Policy Recommendation for Government and other actors**

The MENA region has one of the youngest populations of the world, with a median age of 22 years, including many young migrants. This presents a huge opportunity for the region as a key stakeholder and partner for regional, national and local migration governance, but needs further support to achieve its full potential. **Youth calls on governments to increase inclusion and support to young migrants through more funding to support youth-led and youth-focused initiatives providing support and information sharing** Furthermore, engage youth and migrants meaningfully in decision-making processes at all levels to ensure visibility for their innovative projects and programmes.

Currently, many positive policies have allowed regular labor flows into the region, but still further work has to be done in order to address the different mixed flows and to develop people-centered policies that unlock the full potential of migration for development. In this regard, **youth calls on governments to facilitate and expand pathways for regular, orderly and safe labor migration in the region, in order to not lose the potential of young migrants just because of migratory status.** This includes the creation of facilitations for migrants to access basic services such as health and education in host countries.

Youth highlighted the vulnerability of migrant workers to unfair recruitment practices, labor exploitation, as well as to the violation of their human rights. Youth is working hard to advocate and build capacity with different stakeholders in order to inform migrant workers, employers and authorities of migrant workers rights and best practices. However, it is crucial and beyond our ability to **guarantee the labour rights of migrant workers and ensure the implementation of the principles of fair recruitment**, for which we call on governments and private sector entities to uphold these laws and lead by example.