

UNPACKING THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR SAFE, ORDERLY, AND REGULAR MIGRATION (GCM)



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FOREWORD

Navigating the world of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) can be complex. For many, particularly those not involved day-to-day within international migration policy circles, understanding what the GCM is and what it stands for might seem overwhelming. While numerous stakeholders may have heard of the GCM, its relevance and significance often remain unclear. These organisations and communities, play a critical role in the successful implementation of the GCM at the local and national levels.

We hope this brochure provides a clear overview of the GCM, helping readers and civil society organisations understand its core components and offering practical guidance for effective involvement.

This brochure is a product of collaboration between the **Civil Society Action Committee (AC)** and the **GIZ programme “Shaping development-oriented migration” (MEG)**, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

With a membership of over 50 civil society organisations and networks, the AC is the largest global civil society platform engaged in global migration governance and policy advocacy. The AC is housed by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).

The MEG aims to support partner countries in leveraging the benefits of regular migration, engaging diaspora for sustainable development, and supporting state actors and civil society organisations so that gender-responsive contributions to the GCM can be made.



WHAT IS THE GCM?



Adopted in 2018, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is the **first framework agreed between governments on a common approach to international migration**. While it is not a legally binding UN agreement¹, the GCM has **10 principles** across and **23 objectives** to support governments in designing and implementing policies to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration. The GCM brings together key actors to focus on migrants' needs and vulnerabilities while tapping into the promise that migration significantly contributes to sustainable development².

¹ A non-legally binding UN agreement is one in which signing governments agree to work towards any objectives, plans and statements laid out in the text, but are not held to international law.

² Find more background information to this historical UN framework [here](#).

OVERVIEW OF THE TEN PRINCIPLES

It is **people-centred** and anchored in human rights – migrants' rights are human rights.



It emphasises **cooperation between governments** as a key to success.

It prioritises the specific needs and challenges, including gender-based discrimination and vulnerabilities, of women, girls and gender non-conforming people by taking a gender-responsive approach³.

It upholds a whole-of-government approach to ensure policies are consistent across all government departments, not only the ministry in charge of migration.



HUMAN RIGHTS



GENDER-RESPONSIVE



CHILD-SENSITIVE



WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT
APPROACH



WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY
APPROACH

It upholds a whole-of-society approach to ensure all parts of the community (governments, civil society, private sector, etc.) are involved as stakeholders at every level, from the local to the international.

³ To ensure a common understanding of the principle, governments and stakeholders are invited to explore the guide on "[Mainstreaming Gender into the Six-Step Process for GCM Implementation](#)".

OVERVIEW OF THE GCM OBJECTIVES

The GCM consists of 23 objectives. Each objective includes a commitment and actions for its achievement.



Ensure fair recruitment and safe, decent work for migrants, protecting their rights and promoting dignity in employment

Address and reduce vulnerabilities faced by migrants, ensuring their safety, dignity, and access to essential support

Support migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in their communities



12 SCREENING AND REFERRAL



13 ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION



14 CONSULAR PROTECTION



15 ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES



16 INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION



17 ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION



18 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION



19 MIGRANT AND DIASPORA CONTRIBUTIONS



20 REMITTANCES



21 DIGNIFIED RETURN AND REINTEGRATION



22 SOCIAL PROTECTION



23 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Enhance and diversify pathways for safe, orderly, and regular migration to support opportunities for work, education, and mobility

Strengthen international cooperation and partnerships for safe, orderly, and regular migration

All the GCM objectives are interconnected, with progress or worsening conditions in one objective influencing the achievement of others. This reflects the complex challenges migrants face at all stages of migration, in countries of origin, transit and destination, in their daily lives.

Many stakeholders working on the GCM will group or 'cluster' a few objectives together when looking at the progress of the GCM. Below is an example of objectives that can be 'clustered' for a better understanding:



CIVIL SOCIETY REFLECTION

Does your work fit within the GCM objectives?

It will! The GCM framework covers all areas of migration and extends to other areas of development. For grassroots or civil society, the key is to identify where your work is relevant to any of the 23 objectives. It will likely overlap over many of them. The 10 guiding principles can also be used to find the most relevant approach to your work.

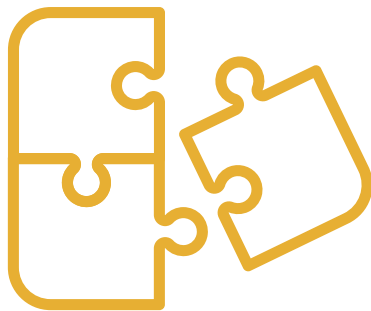
Which GCM objectives would be relevant for you?



Clustering Objectives 5, 6, 7, 19 and 23 highlights the important need for further intersections and collaborations between Member States ministries (e.g., immigration and labour) and agencies, private sector enterprises, recruitment companies, as well as migrant and diaspora-led organisations. Such partnerships are essential to ensure that labour migration agreements and regular pathways safeguard decent work and uphold human rights of migrant workers and their families. Achieving these objectives will enable a more sustainable approach to addressing skills and labor gaps, ensuring safer journeys for migrants while prioritizing their rights and agency and fostering meaningful development for origin, transit, and destination countries.



WHY IS THE GCM RELEVANT?



- As the first broad agreement **between governments for safe, orderly and regular migration, the GCM significantly promotes a shared international understanding and commitment on global migration.** A shared understanding is crucial for fostering cooperation, harmonizing policies, protecting migrants' rights, and addressing challenges that single countries cannot tackle alone.
- As stakeholder involvement is highlighted as essential within the GCM, it provides a critical space for civil society and migrant communities to share the challenges that they face, and advocate for the best solutions that reflect their needs. This ensures that migration policies are inclusive, practical and grounded in lived experiences.
- It offers a framework to pushback against policies and controversial practices that are not in the best interests of migrants and their families and communities.



CIVIL SOCIETY REFLECTION

Is global migration governance making a change on migrant lives?

The link between the implementation of the GCM and visible improvement in migrants' lives is not clear-cut. However, it now gives countries a comprehensive tool in ensuring that migration is safe, orderly, and regular, with advocacy efforts and measurable indicators playing a key role in evaluating its impact.



WHO IMPLEMENTS THE GCM



● Member States

Member States, who are governments that have signed the agreement, have the primary responsibility for implementing the GCM first and foremost. They can develop national plans to prioritise the GCM. These should involve the participation and inputs of civil society, the private sector, diaspora, grassroot organisations and the international community, such as UN agencies, working on migration issues.

Regional engagement - coordination beyond member states:

Member states are also collaborating within regional mechanisms and regional cooperation frameworks.

● UN Network on Migration (UNNM)

The UNNM is a dedicated platform of UN agencies and regional bodies that support Member States in the implementation, monitoring and review of the GCM.

The UNNM has a Coordinator (IOM), and an Executive Committee comprised of a few UN agencies and regional bodies. It is supported by working groups as well as a secretariat which includes a focal point for civil society.

The Network:

- Provides capacity building and technical support to Member States, including workshops, consultations, mapping, and other research to outline challenges, priorities, and concrete actions for the GCM to be implemented.
- Issues statements and calls to action on migration issues
- Hosts activities open to all stakeholders, such as virtual consultations and in-person hearings.
- Coordinates groups of stakeholders working on specific GCM objectives and migration issues.



CIVIL SOCIETY REFLECTION

Does your government have a GCM Action Plan and does local government play a role in implementation?

Member States often engage local governments through their own mechanisms and, in practice, local governments can play an important role in ensuring the GCM's impact on the ground.

GCM Champion Countries

The [GCM Champion Countries](#)⁴ is an open group of Member States that have volunteered to join forces to increase their cooperation, build support and exchange best practices⁵. As of 2024, these 35 countries support the UNNM with ideas and lessons learned. They also meet periodically, producing reports and issuing joint statements related to or highlighting the GCM.

Civil Society

The GCM can only be implemented effectively through strong collaboration across all stakeholders, with civil society and grassroots organisations playing a vital role.

At the global level, the Civil Society Action Committee (AC) (see box) supports civil society engagement in the GCM processes, working with civil society networks and organisations to ensure that grassroots and other diverse groups within civil society are able to participate actively.

Within the UNNM secretariat, the Civil Society Liaison Officer provides support in sharing information on upcoming events for civil society, and opportunities to get involved, such as GCM talks (informal online webinars), GCM reviews and the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).

Civil Society Action Committee

Background: Since 2016, the Action Committee has organised itself as a membership-driven⁶ global platform for collective civil society coordination, advocacy and participation in decision-making spaces for global policy and migration governance.

Primary objective: Sharing key information on what is happening within global migration policy and governance; collective strategising and action; increasing and democratising access for civil society participation from the local to international levels.

⁴ Find the current overview of the champion countries [here](#).

⁵ Best Practices is a common UN term for good examples that are shared in the hopes of helping or inspiring similar initiatives.

⁶ Find the current membership of the Civil Society Action Committee [here](#).



DRIVING GCM IMPLEMENTATION FORWARD



What could GCM implementation look like on the ground?

Access to safe basic services, such as healthcare, education and justice

Decent work and labour rights

Example

Provision of training to stakeholders to enhance their understanding of labour rights and to identify and address instances where these rights and working conditions do not meet human rights standards.

Meaningful
engagement
with migrants
and diaspora

Example

One important area necessary for the GCM to be successfully implemented is to measure progress and help hold States accountable. This is fulfilled through the creation of 'indicators'.

The UNNM has a working group of UN and stakeholders who have developed a set of proposal indicators, through a series of consultations.

However, civil society have identified gaps and questions around its implementation and use in local contexts.



TOOLBOX: GCM INDICATORS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

The Spanish Civil Society Monitoring Network of the GCM has developed, with migrant-led grassroots organisations, a set of indicators for monitoring the implementation of the GCM. Civil society organisations can use these indicators to advocate for meaningful progress in the implementation at national and local levels. Find access to the proposal [here](#).

Human rights-based
regular pathways

Gender-responsive
policies

Example

Many civil society and other expert bodies provide governments with recommendations for developing policies that take into account gender considerations, such as for decent work and labour rights for domestic and other women migrant workers.



TOOLBOX: GENDER-RESPONSIVE GCM IMPLEMENTATION

The GCM advocates for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. UN Women and the Center for Migration, Gender and Justice offer tools to mainstream gender equality in GCM implementation.

The “Mainstreaming Gender into the Six-Step Process for GCM Implementation” guide by UN Women provides a general tool for integrating gender across all stages of project implementation.

“Policies and Practice: A Guide to Gender-Responsive Implementation of the GCM” by UN Women goes into what it means to adopt a gender approach for each GCM objective.

The Gender-Migration Index (GMI) by the [Center for Migration, Gender and Justice](#), is a civil society created tool that puts the lived experiences of women, girls, LGBTQIA+, and gender-diverse migrants at the centre. The Index is based on an indicator system that measures gender-responsiveness and migrant-inclusion in migration policy.



HOW IS THE GCM MONITORED?



National review processes: Each Member State has its own ways for reviewing progress. Many choose to prepare a **Voluntary National Review** report, which is then submitted to the UNNM. Some states engage experts from civil society in consultations to provide input into their report.

Regional and International Reviews bring together Member States to discuss GCM progress and these take place every 2 years, alternating between Regional Migration Review Forums (RMRFs) and the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).

Regional Migration Review Forum (RMRF): Regional Reviews focus on GCM progress in their respective regions and are organised by regional UN bodies⁷.

Each RMRF includes a Stakeholder Hearing, where stakeholders, including civil society, are invited to share their perspectives. Their contributions are then summarised and presented by a Rapporteur during the RMRF. This is an opportunity for civil society to put forward their perspectives and engage with other stakeholders. Regional consultations also can include contributions to the final report.

International Migration Review Forum (IMRF): The IMRF is the primary global space for governments to discuss GCM implementation. It also includes a Stakeholder Hearing, with a Civil Society and a Migrant Representative presenting their summaries during the IMRF.

Before the IMRF, a draft Progress Declaration (PD)⁸, is negotiated by Member States, who then vote to adopt it or not. This PD highlights the GCM's progress and guides States to commit further to the GCM's implementation.

⁷ Find details on each Regional Review and their organising bodies [here](#).

⁸ The Progress Declaration is an overview report of the progress of GCM implementation globally. Find out more [here](#).



CIVIL SOCIETY AND GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT




How can civil society organisations and grass-roots communities engage in the GCM processes?

- Reach out to your government's national GCM network
- Share your work on the UNNM hub database
- Advocate for the adoption of National Action Plans for GCM implementation
- Find out more about civil society preparation for reviews by connecting with your regional civil society networks working on migration
- Engage with global platforms for civil society advocacy such as the Civil Society Action Committee
- Sign up to mailing lists from the Action Committee and UNNM secretariat

What opportunities do the IMRF and the RMRF present for Civil society advocacy?

Civil society can join their efforts together to coordinate advocacy and participation through regional platforms and networks, and international platforms such as the Civil Society Action Committee. Through these, civil society can prepare to participate as effectively as possible with each others' support. This is particularly important to maintain strong civil society participation, and to support or put pressure on governments as necessary.



Key Advocacy Messages from global civil society

1. **Nothing for migrants, without migrants:** the key is to ensure that migrants have opportunities to participate and remain at the centre of the GCM implementation
2. **Enabling civic space and co-creation:** Civil society actors are recognised, supported and encouraged as an essential partners and provided the space to engage proactively in the process.
3. **Gender matters:** the GCM implementation requires closer sensitivity to how gender responsive planning plays out in reality. Using the GCM space for advocacy on matters to women, girls, LGBTIQ+ and wider community.

