



## GFMD PUEBLA PROCESS CONSULTATION Mayors Mechanism — Overview and Key Messages

July 2020

### Introduction

Migration is part of the DNA of cities and an integral part of what it means to be and manage a city; cities are often first responders to the needs of migrants and displaced people. It is therefore essential for effective governance of migration that cities are enabled to contribute to international and national policy making processes.

Indeed, with the [Marrakesh Mayors Declaration](#), mayors strongly affirmed that *‘Cities are a force for change, and their efforts and active participation are essential to achieving the GCM and the GCR objectives. A structured dialogue with local governments on migration issues at national and international levels is fundamental to ensure adequate responses and guarantee the implementation of the GCM and GCR.’*

With the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the role and contribution of cities in the governance of migration has been formally acknowledged through their inclusion in the implementation and review structures of those compacts. Local and regional authorities have also been recognized as a key stakeholder in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) process, resulting in the creation of a **Mayors Mechanism** in December 2018. The 6<sup>th</sup> Mayoral Forum in Quito in January 2020 was the first time mayors and city leaders were formally integrated in the annual GFMD Summit.

#### The GFMD Mayors Mechanism

Established in 2018, the Mayors Mechanism – co-steered by [United Cities and Local Governments \(UCLG\)](#), [The Mayors Migration Council \(MMC\)](#) and [The International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) – aims at including local and regional authorities within the GFMD process, bringing their voices and expertise into state-led deliberations, and intensifying the dialogue between different levels of government and different stakeholder groups.

## The GFMD 2020 – Chairmanship of the United Arab Emirates

The current GFMD Chair, United Arab Emirates (UAE), has planned six regional online consultations which aim to inform the discussions and background papers of the GFMD Summit, planned for 11 – 15 January 2021 in Dubai. In this [yearlong process](#), the Chair has prioritized 6 thematic areas (labour migration, skills, new technologies, migrant protection, irregular migration and partnerships), which will ‘direct the course of 2020 activities towards a conversation that is future-focused and partnership-oriented’.

### The GFMD Regional Consultations in a nutshell

**Objective:** Discuss the GFMD 2020 thematic areas from a regional perspective.

**Outputs:** Identify common challenges, possible solutions, and new partnerships on specific themes to be captured by a ‘thematic expert’ in a final outcome paper.

**Participation:** National governments, local authorities, civil society, UN Agencies, the private sector.

**Structure:** Each consultation consists of an opening plenary call, thematic webinars (3 per region) and a closing plenary.

## Puebla Process Consultations

The GFMD Puebla Process Consultation series is organized by the UAE and the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM or Puebla Process). While the consultation is a GFMD - led event, it is co-hosted with the Puebla Process. This means the Puebla Chair — Costa Rica — extended an invitation to member states to participate and has selected three priority topics from the list of 6 themes (see above) identified by the UAE. Invitations have also gone out to members of the South American Conference on Migration.

The three topics that were discussed in the Puebla Process Consultation were:

1. [Skilling migrants for employment](#)
2. [Addressing gaps in migrant protection](#)
3. [Discussing approaches to address irregular migration](#)

The Mayors Mechanism, in coordination with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) networks in the region (MERCOCIUDADES, FLACMA and CONGOPE), identified a list of Local and Regional Authority (LRA) representatives to participate in the specific sessions.

### Thematic session on Narratives on Migration

The Government of Canada together with the Mayors Mechanism are the co-chairs of a newly established GFMD **Migration Narratives Working Group**. In this light, the UAE and the Puebla Process agreed to add a thematic session on June 18 to discuss possible alliances and cooperation opportunities on that specific topic in the region.

Dates EN	Type of Session
4 June	Opening Plenary
11 June	Thematic breakout session 1
	Thematic breakout session 2
	Thematic breakout session 3
	Closing session
18 June	Thematic breakout session on narratives
30 June	Closing plenary

## Overview of Key Messages Delivered by LRAs

In their contributions throughout the consultations, LRA representatives referred to a number of advocacy documents, such as the [Marrakesh Mayors Declaration](#), adopted in 2018.

### Recurring and cross cutting messages from LRAs in the Puebla consultations:

- **Legal framework:** in practice, local governments are the ones that foster inclusion of migrants into the local communities. Some cities can effectively take up this role, as they have the constitutional freedom to shape their own local municipal policies regarding migration. Others have **limited mandates** with limits their effectiveness, and which should be **expanded** to match the reality of urban migration.
- **Vertical and horizontal policy coherence:** Existing **national migration governance frameworks** should be elaborated in close coordination with local authorities and need to include decentralized actions and budgeting in order to empower local authorities. Public policies also need to include **migrant-sensitive** specifications and strive for the inclusion of all populations in access to services regardless of status.
- **Partnerships and participation:** national and regional migration policies need to be designed in coordination with all stakeholders, including LRAs, the diaspora, civil society and the private sector. There is an opportunity to test new partnerships where LRAs work directly with humanitarian and development actors and can access needed technical support and financing.
- **Regional cooperation:** cooperation is key to ensure effective and inclusive migration management. LRAs hailed the [MERCOSUR Residence Agreement](#), where 9 South American countries ensure that migrants can freely move, work and access services.
- **The importance of data at local level:** there is a lack of reliable data that looks at vulnerabilities of the population, in particular at local level. Efforts to localize the [IOM's Migration Governance Indicators](#) need to be replicated.

## Topic 1 – Skilling Migrants for Employment

### LRA representatives:

- Juan Pablo Gutierrez, Focal point for the Office of Labour Intermediation, Municipality of La Pintana, Chile
- Sergio Arredondo, Secretary General of the Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Local government associations (FLACMA)

### Key Takeaways:

- Cities showcased the **key role** they play in facilitating economic integration of migrants. They shared examples of how they work with the private sector at local level to facilitate labour opportunities for migrants while also trying to alleviate concerns and administrative hurdles that companies face. If such actions are accompanied by legal counselling of migrants to regularize their status, and access to training opportunities for migrants, they can form a powerful strategy to successfully integrate migrants.

*‘Communication and direct contact with migrant communities is key. The municipality of La Pintana has set up [an office for ‘labor intermediation’](#), where migrants can find the necessary information and assistance with regards to economic opportunities.’ (Juan Pablo Caceido, La Pintana)*

- **Clear and transparent information on labour pathways** is of key importance for cities to be able to assist migrants with their economic integration.
- Cities explained they facilitate economic inclusion of migrants through offering **capacity building and training opportunities**. They emphasised it is important to open such opportunities not only for migrants but for the overall population. Indeed, any action the cities undertake to foster integration, will need to take into account the needs and realities of the local communities.
- Due to COVID-19 and the quarantine, there is significant worry that migrant workers will be hardest hit as they are often the first ones to lose their jobs. Cities have been instrumental in providing direct support in terms of housing, food and financial assistance but they are overstretched with limited resources to continue this level of direct support.

## Topic 2 – Addressing Gaps in Migrant Protection

### LRA representatives:

- Anacláudia Marinheiro Centeno Rossbach, Regional Manager – Latin America and Caribbean, Cities Alliance
- Nancy Perez, Human Rights Commission of Mexico City
- Nelson Fernández, Secretary General of Mercociudades

### Key Takeaways:

- Cities expressed concern with regards to the **lack of action from national governments** in the region to effectively respond to protection needs of migrants, despite that many have signed the Cartagena Declaration. Too often migrants are considered merely ‘economic migrants’, but the reasons people migrate go beyond economic factors. called on national governments to not exacerbate vulnerabilities and, for example, criticized the practice of detaining children in closed centers.
- Cities recognized the **different realities within the Americas**: in the **corridor of Central America, Mexico, North America**, cities talked about the migrant caravans

that hit Central America and Mexico in 2018, and how these showcased the particular challenges and protection needs of migrants in transit. Cities have played a key role in providing assistance to migrants in these corridors. For example, Mexico City established a [humanitarian corridor](#), in close **collaboration** with the national government, UNHCR, UNICEF, OHCHR, civil society and the National Commission on Human Rights, with the aim to bring support to the (informal) settlements and shelters by providing food and water, shelter, medical support, and safety. In this subregion, cities expressed the **need for improved regional coordination** and cooperation on migration governance.

*'The experience of the humanitarian corridor in Mexico City has led to the development of the [Protocol for emergency humanitarian assistance to migrants and / or subjects of international protection in Mexico City](#). This approach has showcased that it is essential to coordinate across sectors and actors.'*  
(Nancy Perez, Mexico City)

- In South America, cities talked about MERCOSUR, which facilitates **free movement within the region**. For example, in Uruguay, the MERCOSUR regulations ensure that all migrants get provisional documents upon arrival, and that their residence permit is formal as a second step. Migrants can then access services and the labour market and request citizenship. This approach was welcomed by LRAs as it is the best way to foster integration and combat discrimination.
- Cities highlighted the difficulties they face in reaching migrant populations due to **lack of data at local level**, which creates a certain degree of 'invisibility' of migrants, in particular irregular migrants.
- The biggest **protection challenges** cities mentioned were: lack of access to health care, lack of access to affordable housing and food, xenophobia and discrimination within local communities, access to justice and legal support (not only with regards to their migratory status, but with regards to their overall rights). These challenges are only exacerbated within cities due to COVID-19. In order to mitigate these challenges, certain cities have set up specific actions targeted at migrant and refugee populations during the pandemic. For example, Montevideo has set up a fund to prevent migrants being evicted from their rented houses.
- As local authorities, **working with civil society** and other local stakeholders was identified as key to effectively reach migrants. Some cities – such as São Paulo – have institutionalised a **local dialogue with migrant leaders** such as a 'Municipal Council of Immigrants' consisting of elected migrants leaders which advises the city on issues related to immigrants and refugees and the implementation of the city migration policy.
- LRAs highlighted the need to incorporate migrant and refugee sensitive responses across **all public policies** as well as into **emergency planning and response**. The region is particularly vulnerable for natural disasters and the effects of climate change. COVID-19 has also shown the need to provide **migrant-sensitive responses at local level**.

*‘Learning from the current pandemic, it will be critical to adjust migration policies going forward, with a view to making sure they grant access of migrants to social protection measures. The national Immigration Law of Brazil (2017) is an excellent example of a human centered approach to migration management.’  
(Anacláudia Marinheiro Centeno Rossbach, Cities Alliance)*

### Topic 3: Addressing Irregular Migration

#### LRA representatives:

- Edwin Miño, Executive Director, Consortium of Autonomous Provincial Governments of Ecuador (CONGOPE), Ecuador
- Laura V. Gonzalez-Murphy, Director of the Office for New Americans, New York State, United States
- Rosmery Acarapi, Secretary of Social Development, La Paz, Bolivia

#### Key Takeaways:

- Cities emphasized that addressing irregular migration locally has different aspects, and means:
  - 1. To ensure that those who reside irregularly have access to services.**

**LRAS** stressed the need to ensure access to services to migrants regardless of status, and there are many examples of national governments or cities ensuring that irregular migrants have access to services without fear of being reported to immigration services. Ensuring such access is the best way to control and sustain the wellbeing of the overall population.
  - 2. To assist and provide opportunities for irregular migrants to become regular.**

**LRAs affirmed that** regularizing irregular migrants is the best way to ensure their social integration and is the best tool to ensure everyone in the community can prosper. **LRA’s** noted that regularization also facilitates migrants’ ability to contribute economically to host communities, and ensures they are not exploited and can work in conditions that are safe and fair. **LRAs** play a key role in providing legal counsel for irregular migrants, and examples were mentioned where cities work with the private sector to help migrants achieve the necessary skills for economic integration.
  - 3. To prevent migrants from having to travel irregularly, through the creation of additional pathways for regular migration.** Migrating irregularly almost always happens in unsafe conditions and entails additional risks for those in vulnerable situations such as women and children migrants. A lack of regular pathways also supports organized crime, trafficking networks and sustains the widespread availability of misinformation about concrete opportunities for migration. In order to address this, cities highlighted the need to develop adequate pathways for regular pathways. **LRAs** highlighted a myriad of options that a central government might undertake to develop such pathways and can be set up in partnership with the private sector, faith-based organizations, communities and local authorities. Pathways might have compassionate or economic grounds and should look at

fostering labour migration across all skills levels. There are multiple examples that exist in the region.

- Cities stressed the need for national governments to develop **clear communication tools** about the opportunities and procedures for regular migration. Too often such information is not widely available or disseminated through a limited group of organizations, which generates false expectations, and confusing guidelines for local authorities to provide support.
- Cities highlighted the **need for available data at local level** on irregular migration and highlighted the need for capacity building at local level to ensure the localization of national and regional data collection efforts. It would be useful to include data collected from migrants to understand the reasons for migrating and the conditions of their situation before departure and during transit.

#### Topic 4: Balancing Narratives on Migration

##### LRA representatives:

- Alma Cristina Rodriguez Vallejo, General Director System 'DIF', Leon, Mexico
- Alexander Van Leuven, Mechelen, Belgium
- Antonello Antinori, Communication expert, Lampedusa, Italy
- David Lubell, Director, Welcoming International
- Hayat Sami, Focal Point for International Cooperation and Partnerships, Rabat, Morocco
- Marina Luna, Adviser on Policies for Immigrants and Promotion of Decent Work - Municipal Human Rights and Citizenship Secretariat, São Paulo, Brasil
- Rodolfo Alejandro Ponce Avila, General Director of the Directorate of Rural Development, Leon, Mexico
- Veronique Lamontagne, Migration lead in the International Relations Office, Montreal, Canada

##### Key Takeaways:

- Cities acknowledged that perceptions about migration have become increasingly polarized in recent years, and COVID-19 has made this challenge all the more apparent. Cities also expressed fear of a **rising xenophobia** in the coming months, noting that misinformation about COVID-19 and the expected economic depression are likely to increase social tensions within their communities and globally.
- Recent research was highlighted that shows there is strong **support for mayors in their efforts to ensure access to services for all during this pandemic**, and a wide recognition that migrants are key in any response and recovery effort. COVID-19 might bring an important opportunity to think about what it means to build inclusive societies, and to discuss how we define the 'us' in our communities. Communication, in particular at local level, will be essential to make use of this momentum through collaboration and partnership between the diverse actors.
- It was noted that messages that target the entire population — rather than siloed migrants — are crucial. Research presented suggests that messages that focus on the benefits of **inclusive societies and community solidarity**, rather than on the benefits migration brings, might have a stronger impact in the post COVID era. It was also



noted that it will be important, in particular in an era of COVID-19, to **showcase concrete benefits of unity and diversity**: balancing narratives is for the benefit of all. In COVID-19 times, resentment can arise when services are provided for migrants but not local populations, so policies and narratives must be inclusive of whole communities.

- Cities recognized the need for **accessible facts, data, and analysis** in creating and disseminating narratives on migration, but that translating messages to the local needs and context is necessary to ensure that messages are heard and believed: it is critical to **build messages from the ground-up**.
- Support for a variety of **partnerships** was reiterated throughout the session. Local governments are often more trusted than national governments, and so can be a very effective instigator for balancing narratives. Many international organisations and civil society organisations can provide guidance or assistance to national governments in their messaging or creation of policy. Partnerships between business and government can address general barriers to well-functioning migration, as well as barriers specific to displaced people.

*'In 2006 the city of Nashville, USA, launched a campaign to reinforce the message that when we effectively include migrants in local communities, everyone benefits. The experience of Nashville led to the birth of Welcoming America, which now is working with over 100 local communities in the US.'*  
(David Lubell, Welcoming International)

- Cities showcased concrete practices and examples of ongoing work with regards to narratives. For example, the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR, has grown to become an active global front against racism and discrimination and has a [strong network in the Americas](#).