



08 July 2020

Standing in solidarity with migrants:

Supporting civil society and other stakeholders in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

The UN Network on Migration salutes all actors providing vital protection, monitoring, advocacy, information and support to and in collaboration with migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Civil society organizations, migrant and diaspora associations, workers and employers organizations, national human rights institutions, youth and women-led organizations, local authorities and communities, the private sector and others play a vital role in protecting many of those rendered most vulnerable by the pandemic and responses to it. The Network calls for increased recognition for this work, including through avenues for meaningful participation and greater governmental and financial support.

The challenges many migrants already faced are now exacerbated by responses to COVID-19 that, whether by design or indirectly, lead to discrimination and exclusion. Access to relief measures, government support and national COVID-19 policy responses such as income support and social protection measures have, for many, remained elusive. What has emerged is a picture of a response to a virus that is as unequal in impact as COVID-19 itself, reinforcing patterns of discrimination, alongside heightened racism, xenophobia and intolerance against migrant workers and their families, while also violating their human rights.

As noted by the [Secretary-General in his 3 June policy brief on COVID-19 and People on the Move](#), the exclusion of people on the move is the same reason they are among the most vulnerable to this pandemic today. He further stressed that such exclusion of migrants from policy responses not only undermines their fundamental human rights but also collective public health strategies to control and rollback the pandemic. Inclusion will pay off and is the only way that we can emerge from this crisis and overcome COVID-19.

In the face of these gaps, civil society and other relevant stakeholders have stepped into the breach. They are providing multi-lingual information on COVID-19 adapted to the context migrants are living and working in, hotlines on gender-based violence and harassment, legal services and advice on complaint mechanisms, human rights monitoring, mental health support, training, advocacy and campaign support. They have created solidarity networks and provide support to migrants, including food, water, essential medicine, shelter, personal protective equipment and economic assistance. They have established relief funds for farm workers, domestic workers and others who lost their livelihoods as a result of the pandemic. Workers and employers organizations, including through social dialogue and in coordination with local authorities, are promoting equal treatment, decent work and respect for fundamental principles and rights at work. Civil society organizations and other stakeholders are also facilitating migrants to be included in the planning of policy

responses to the pandemic. Concerted action of governments and stakeholders in developing COVID-19 policy responses is key in ensuring that migrants' rights and contributions are addressed and fostered.

The UN Network on Migration has actively undertaken a [COVID-19 online series](#) of Listening Sessions to hear directly from stakeholders at local, national and global levels providing a platform to exchange information and mutually reinforce responses. Reflections from these individuals and groups on thematic and cross-cutting issues serve as a resource for examples from the ground and recommendations for good practices.

What is clear from these discussions, and other reports, is that in providing this vital assistance, these organizations are acting as a critical safety net when State measures are lacking and where movement restrictions severely limit the ability of others to effectively support migrants. Further, they are performing these roles at the very moment they too face a crisis of capacity – brought on both by the scale of the emergency and increasing constraints on their own resources.

The UN Network on Migration calls for greater acknowledgement and support to these actors, particularly for their inclusive participation in planning responses to the pandemic and flexible and fast-tracked funding to civil society organizations and other key stakeholders, to address gaps and needs in response to COVID-19.

Such additional support, however, should complement and not replace the primary obligation for States to provide COVID-19 responses that are non-discriminatory and respect human rights. This must include ensuring access to government relief packages, social protection, healthcare, education and other basic services to all migrants, regardless of status.

The many States and local authorities that have initiated migrant-inclusive COVID-19 responses and support to stakeholders serve as examples of good practices. In a time of dramatically increasing strains on public financing, it is important that all these actors – and their work with migrants – are acknowledged as essential partners for a truly collective response to COVID-19.

The Network also urges governments to recall their commitments in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), including in their whole-of-society approach. The Network calls on States to also implement these recommendations where they apply to refugees and asylum-seekers and to protect the human rights of all migrants, regardless of status, including the human rights to the highest attainable health of everyone equally.

The Guiding Principles of the GCM recognise that the pursuit of principled migration governance requires the input of all sectors of government and society. Now, more than ever, is the time to ensure that this principle is upheld.

The United Nations established a Network on Migration to support the implementation, follow-up and review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) as well as ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to Member States.

In carrying out its mandate, the Network prioritizes the rights and well-being of migrants and their communities of destination, origin, and transit. It places emphasis on those issues where a common UN system approach would add value and from which results and impact can be readily gauged.

Through its Mobility in the Time of Covid-19 briefings¹, the Network will continue to support civil society through holding regular Listening Sessions with stakeholders to inform the responses of the UN system, and amplify civil society initiatives including through the use of the GCM.

Media points of contact:

ILO

Adam Bowers
Planning and Coordination Officer for Communication
+41 (0)22 799 63 48
newsroom@ilo.org

IOM

Safa Msehli
smsehli@iom.int or media@iom.int

OHCHR

Rupert Colville
Spokesperson / Head of Media. +41 22 917 9767 rcolville@ohchr.org

UNODC

Ms. Sonya Yee
Speechwriter and Spokesperson
Office of the Executive Director
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
sonya.yee@un.org

¹ <https://www.migrationnetwork.un.org/online-series-mobility-time-covid-19>