GFMD Mayors Mechanism
Update on COVID-19
April 2020

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Introduction by the Mayors Mechanism Coordinator

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Today we face a global health crisis of unprecedented proportions, with serious social and economic implications for our societies. Mayors, governors, and local administrations are on the frontlines in managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and leaders across the world have acknowledged that the fight against COVID-19 cannot be won without including the most vulnerable in prevention, response, and recovery regardless of their status. Indeed, migrants, refugees and displaced persons share the same vulnerabilities as other residents, but they may also face a range of other challenges that put them at risk – such as limited access to health services, inadequate housing conditions, lack of information in their language, discrimination, and rising levels of xenophobia. In Chicago, US, Mayor Lori Lightfoot issued an executive order ensuring that migrants and refugees regardless of status have access to municipal response benefits and services. In Mogadishu, Somalia, the city installed portable sanitation stations for internally displaced persons. In Portugal, the government changed its policy to treat all migrants and asylum seekers as permanent residents. These are just a few of the bold; direct actions leaders are taking to ensure no one is left behind.

Migrants and refugees must also be recognized as integral community members who directly contribute to response efforts every day. Migrants serve in some of the most at-risk sectors, such as health care, agriculture, food processing and delivery. Recognizing this reality, leaders in New York, New Jersey, Nevada, Ontario, Buenos Aires, France, Germany and Spain have removed restrictions so that migrant healthcare workers can serve in the response to COVID-19, and this list is growing. Jobs previously labelled as low skilled are now recognized as key and essential in combatting this crisis. These key workers – often migrants – are the ones risking their lives to save others. Within their communities, migrant leaders are also taking a stand and mobilizing directly: in the Czech Republic, Vietnamese community groups are self-organizing to make free homemade masks for first responders, and in The Netherlands migrants set up a volunteer help desk to provide information on COVID-19 in Arabic and Tigrinya. The list of community solidarity initiatives is endless. While we face drastic and long-term challenges presented by the pandemic, this renewed recognition also marks an unprecedented opportunity to affirm the value migrants bring to communities and economies.

As local and regional governments around the world face the threat of COVID-19 at different times, there is an opportunity for swift action and impact mitigation that can be seized, and as we write, city networks and partner organizations are establishing platforms to share these lessons efficiently and at scale. There is also a need to engage in structured dialogue with national governments, the international community and other stakeholders, as COVID-19 requires action and collaboration at all levels. The Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD), as the only international and state-led, multi-actor forum to discuss migration and development, is uniquely positioned to bolster new solutions to shared challenges brought by COVID-19.

The GFMD Mayors Mechanism stands ready to make sure the voice and expertise of local and regional governments are part of this dialogue. With this 'Mayors Mechanism update on COVID-19', we are pleased to share concrete opportunities for engagement, as well as information that might be of use for your work.

Should you have concrete questions to the Mayors Mechanism, or should there be concrete issues you would like to see addressed in future updates from the Mayors Mechanism, please email me at: info@mayorsmechanism.org

In solidarity,

Sophie van Haasen
Coordinator of the GFMD Mayors Mechanism

1. The GFMD Mayors Mechanism and activities on COVID-19

Established in December 2018, the GFMD Mayors Mechanism (MM), co-steered by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Mayors Migration Council (MMC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is designed to bring the expertise, priorities and concerns of local and regional authorities into the thematic agenda, deliberations and outcomes of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). The MM hereby aims to maximize opportunities for local authorities to interact and partner with the different constituencies of the GFMD.

As the unprecedented health crisis caused by COVID-19 unfolds at immense speed, the enormity of its implications for migrants is equally gaining attention. The GFMD, as the only international and state-led, multi-actor forum to discuss migration and development, is uniquely positioned to bolster new solutions to shared challenges brought by COVID-19. The current GFMD Chair, the United Arab Emirates is providing the space for such discussions: it has planned a series of multi-actor webinars, and is looking to connect COVID-19 discussions to the regional consultations and GFMD Summit. The MM is part of such deliberations, and will seek for your advice, input and expertise as these activities unfold.

As a first step, the GFMD Chair has planned a series of webinars dedicated to COVID-19. These webinars will aim to reflect on challenges that migrants face; to take stock of responses and to identify joint action to mitigate the adverse impact of COVID-19 on migrants and migrant communities. The webinars are open to all interested, and will be multi-stakeholder with interaction between national governments, civil society, local authorities and the private sector. They will be repeated twice to accommodate different time zones. The first set of webinars will take place this month:

> Details:
>
> o Tuesday 28th April 2020 at **07:00 UTC** (09:00 CET) (English / French interpretation)
>
> o Thursday 30th April 2020 at **15:00 UTC** (17:00 CET) (English / Spanish interpretation)
>
> o To register, please email your name, email address and preferred webinar date to the GFMD Support Unit (support.unit@gfmd.org) **before Monday 27th of April**.
>
> o We also invite you to take this survey to inform the discussions and focus of the webinar. (5min to fill out – survey closes this **Friday 24th of April**).

A second set of webinars will take place later in the year, and will seek to discuss longer-term implications and solutions. The MM will keep you informed once further details are available.

-> To read more about the UAE Chairmanship, click here.

-> For more information on the GFMD and COVID-19, please consult the GFMD website.

2.   A selection of recent tools for local authorities

Below you can find an overview of resources that might be useful in shaping your response with regards to migrants and refugees. Some have been developed by and for local authorities, others are more general but can be of specific service to the local level.

A.   City-specific activities and reference documents

Who?	What?
UCLG, **Metropolis** **and UN-Habitat**	Live learning experience: #beyondtheoutbreak UCLG, Metropolis and UN-Habitat have launched a Live learning experience with local and regional governments to create a virtual community to share experiences of crisis management and protection in light of COVID19 through a series of virtual exchanges on specific topics, including migration. The inputs and outcomes of these sessions are shared on the UCLG website. For more information, please contact Fatima Fernandez: f.fernandez@uclg.org.
MMC	MMC Live Resource Guide In an effort to understand how cities are responding to COVID-19 as it relates to migrant and refugee communities, the Mayors Migration Council created a live tool which contains resources on city, city network, and global responses and concrete examples of city actions to best serve migrants and refugees. For more information or to request additions to this guide, email Maggie Powers: mpowers@mayorsmigrationcouncil.org.

B.   Resources with a focus on migrant and refugee – sensitive responses

Who?	What?
IOM	COVID-19 information in 27 languages Information addresses: o Essential information about COVID-19 and what to do to protect oneself and prevent the spread of the disease. Based on WHO guidelines, they are available in multiple languages and are suitable for information campaigns. o Should you need translation of this document into an additional language, please write Covid19MM@iom.int
WHO	Preparedness, prevention and control of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) for refugees and migrants in non-camp settings - Interim guidance, *April 2020* Guidance addresses: o Coordination and planning o Risk communication and community engagement o Surveillance, case investigation and outbreak rapid response team o Individual health screening o Laboratory system o Case management and continuity of essential health services o Logistics, procurement and supply management

Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC)	[Scaling-up COVID-19 Outbreak, readiness and response operations in humanitarian situations, including camps and camp-like settings](#), *March 2020* Guidance addresses: o Coordination and planning o Risk communication and community engagement o Surveillance, case investigation and outbreak rapid response team o Individual health screening o Laboratory system o Case management and continuity of essential health services o Logistics, procurement and supply management
IASC	[COVID – 19: How to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement](#), *March 2020* Guidance addresses: o Analysis on vulnerabilities specific population groups o Possible actions to ensure full inclusion of such groups o Specific info on: women, the elderly, adolescents, youth, and children, persons with disabilities, indigenous populations, refugees, migrants, and minorities
WHO, UNICEF and International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC)	[A guide to preventing and addressing social stigma](#), *February 2020* Guidance addresses: o Practical steps to address social stigma with regards to COVID-19 o Communication tips, and 'dos and don'ts' on language when talking about COVID-19
IOM	[COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots on specific topics](#) in English and Spanish, *April 2020* Information includes: o Analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on migration on a variety of topics such as remittances, detention, discrimination, human trafficking, food supply and children o Topics will be added and repeated as analysis develops o If you have a topic to include, please email IOM at research@iom.int

For a full overview of all World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, please consult the [WHO website](#).

3.   Important contact details

WHO: eurohealthycities@who.int

IOM: Covid19MM@iom.int

UCLG Regional focal points:

o   Africa: Lionel Nzamba, lnzamba@uclga.org

o   Asia Pacific: Bernadia Irawati, bernadia@uclg-aspac.org

o   Europe: Carlos Mascarell, Europe: Carlos.MascarellVilar@ccre-cemr.org

o   Eurasia: Rasikh Sagitov, uclg@yandex.ru

o   Latin America: Nelson Fernández, nelson.fernandez@imm.gub.uy and Sergio Arredondo, sergio.arredondo@fenamm.org.mx

o   Middle East and West Asia: Yasmin Alhayek, y.alhayek@uclg-mewa.org

4. Key advocacy messages on the role of local leaders to ensure migrant and refugee sensitive COVID-19 response and recovery efforts (*Adapted from the Mayors Migration Council Resource [Guide](#)*)

- Pandemics know no borders and don't discriminate. People facing economic and social vulnerabilities, and those living in dense, highly populated urban environments, are particularly at risk of contracting the disease. Inclusive policies are indispensable to curb de pandemic and to secure socioeconomic recovery afterwards.

- While COVID-19 is first and foremost a public health issue, the pandemic is having an "unprecedented impact on mobility" according to the UN Migration Agency (IOM) both in terms of regimes for border and migration management, and the situation of all people on the move, including those displaced by conflict or disaster.

- Within local communities, migrants (both in regular and irregular status), asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons face the same vulnerabilities as other residents but often face additional challenges. This includes overcrowded living conditions, limited access to health services and risk information in their language, fear of accessing services, stigmatization, and a lack of financial means or access to support funds to withstand isolation.

- At the same time, concern over the spread of the virus is fueling anti-immigrant and refugee narratives and xenophobia across the world. Migrants and refugees have been targeted and consequently may be reluctant to seek testing of COVID-19 or services because they fear stigma, discrimination and violence. At a time when solidarity and social cohesion are critical we are witnessing the rise of tensions and divisions worldwide. We need strong and meaningful leadership as well as strong messaging to combat polarization.

- Migrants and refugees are also integral community members that directly contribute their skills and resources to the preparedness, emergency and recovery phases of this crisis. They make essential contributions to the community as health care workers, sanitation and construction workers, grocers, farmers, and postal workers, among others. While migrants and refugees may find themselves in situations of vulnerability, they are also critical in efforts to tackle to effects of the disease and are key members in designing and implementing recovery plans.

- When our plans account for the most vulnerable groups in society, everyone benefits. To meet our responsibility to flatten the curve and to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, as leaders we must ensure that migrants (regardless of their legal status), asylum seekers and refugees are included in preparedness, emergency response (from mitigation to health provision), and recovery plans and that these communities are actively reassured that they can seek help, without fear of arrest or deportation.

- Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons may be especially vulnerable to health risks. They need practical and non-discriminatory access to information, and to adequate health services, including early detection, isolation and treatment. This is not only a moral and legal imperative; it is also a public health one to ensure the safety and well-being of the entire community.

- Beyond emergency management, it is critical that leaders start planning now for socio-economic recovery and that the most vulnerable, including migrants and refugees, are included in those recovery plans. Beyond livelihood support, measures to re-build social cohesion and positive migration narratives will be necessary.

- With the right policies in place, the potential of migration can be harnessed to contribute to recovery efforts. The skills, resources and business networks of migrants and diaspora organizations can be capitalized upon to support the recovery of urban economies and societies.

- Addressing this pandemic is not only about responding to local realities — it is about playing our part in achieving global goals. We as mayors stay committed to implementing the Marrakech Mayors Declaration, which calls for non-discriminatory access to health and other services regardless of status, by endorsing key provisions of the Global Compact for Migration and Global Compact on Refugees; the Sustainable Development Goals; the New Urban Agenda; and the Paris Agreement. We must not lose sight of these global goals and ensure we live up to our promise to leave no one behind.

the GFMD Mayors Mechanism is steered by