

## QUNO BRIEFING PAPER:

### **Enhancing Meaningful Participation of Migrants, Migrant Organizations and Organized Migrant Groups in Regional Migration Review Processes**

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QUNO places a strong emphasis on promoting meaningful participation by migrants. For us, it is integral to migration justice and to delivering on the promise of the [Global Compact for Migration](#) (GCM). Involving migrants, migrant organizations, and/or organized migrant groups in policymaking and implementation at all levels, including within the UN events and processes, leads to a better understanding of the impact of policies and programmes. This approach enables decision-makers to draw on migrants' expertise, facilitating more just and effective migration governance. It is both an ethical imperative and a strategic necessity.

This paper is intended to prompt all actors involved in convening or contributing to the GCM Regional Reviews to act to improve meaningful migrant participation.

Whilst seeking to increase representation it should be recognized that no individual or organization can universally represent or speak for a group as diverse as migrants. No one person or organization can fully represent the diverse experiences of all migrants. There is value in engaging intentionally with migrants who are part of organized groups and processes. Migrants belonging to structured groups and networks can bring contributions that extend beyond individual viewpoints and may have expertise in collaboratively shaping and advocating for collective, community-driven, and accountable policy proposals, campaigns, and initiatives. However, in some contexts, it is not possible for migrants to establish formal organizations due to factors such as legal constraints, social barriers, or limited resources.

Recognizing this means using varied approaches for meaningful engagement and considering a broad range of perspectives while acknowledging that not everyone will be present at the table(s). It means investing in greater outreach and it means enabling rotation so that a wider range of experiences and expertise can be drawn on and a larger group of migrants and organized migrant groups can engage with and learn from UN processes. No process will be perfect. The Regional Reviews offer an opportunity to try better ways of working and to learn from these, ideally through participatory and iterative approaches towards ever better processes.

#### ***Delivering on the promise of the GCM***

States committed to migrant participation in migration governance in the GCM and added specificity to this commitment in the IMRF Progress Declaration ([A/RES/76/266](#)), in which States “recognize that migrants are integral to our societies”<sup>1</sup> and “commit to promoting their meaningful participation in policy discussions on issues affecting them.”<sup>2</sup>

#### ***“Nothing about migrants without migrants”***

This reflects the strong call from migrants at the 2022 IMRF for “nothing about us without us.” This was echoed by many civil society groups, some States, and the President of the General Assembly and the Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration, the Director General of IOM.

Despite this, there are differing levels of buy-in for enabling meaningful participation. The challenge now is to live up to these words, this is a challenge of technical capacity, funds, resources, political will, and organizational and individual commitment as well as public support. There is no unified understanding of what delivering on this commitment looks like in practice. This gives space, within the guidelines and principles outlined here, to be creative in ensuring that participation is not tokenistic,

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<sup>1</sup> Progress Declaration, International Migration Review Forum 2022, paragraph 53.

<sup>2</sup> Progress Declaration, International Migration Review Forum 2022, paragraph 51.

is not limited to storytelling or soundbites, and is as inclusive as possible. This includes an intentionally intersectional approach in assessing who is not being engaged with, why, and how to overcome barriers to participation, including those related to gender, race, sexuality, and migration status. The Regional Reviews are a logical next step through which to strengthen the meaningful participation of migrants, including through organized migrant groups and develop more examples of how to achieve this in different contexts.

### *Levels of participation*

As outlined in our paper on [Meaningful Participation: Centring Migrant Expertise and Experience](#), participation in the planning and delivery of policy processes can take many forms. Different levels of participation can be assessed on this scale:

1. **Contribution:** creating space for migrants to deliver input voluntarily or in other predetermined ways to programmes and projects.
2. **Information-sharing:** migrants are informed about their rights, responsibilities, and available resources, materials, and training.
3. **Consultation:** migrants have the opportunity to give feedback, make suggestions, and voice their concerns.
4. **Cooperation and consensus-building:** migrants to negotiate positions and help prioritise goals.
5. **Decision-making:** migrants have a meaningful and clear role in making decisions about policy, project design, and implementation, including assessing and prioritizing recommendations.
6. **Partnership:** migrants work together with those tasked with leading processes. towards mutual goals.
7. **Transformation:** Delegation of control over decision-making and resources to migrants.

Across all of these levels, expertise, dedication, and time invested by migrants should be acknowledged and reflected in resources including remuneration.

### *Guiding principles for meaningful migrant participation*

Efforts should be made to deliver the most participatory process possible within the constraints of the Regional Review processes, whilst also advancing towards and advocating for longer-term changes in access, process, and representation. These principles and enabling actions are intended to move towards meaningful migrant participation:

- **Leadership and agency:** migrants are seen as peers and partners, and their multiple roles as teachers and policy influencers are recognized in ongoing processes, including through remuneration for engagement. Participation goes beyond tokenism, attendance without influence and sharing personal stories as storytellers.
- **Safe space:** space is created to encourage migrants, regardless of their status, to participate and express their views freely taking into account the different risks and barriers for those experiencing marginalization.
- **Diversity, equity, and intersectionality:** the broadest possible range of migrant experience is included, with a strong emphasis on the most affected and marginalized groups including undocumented migrants, low-wage migrant workers, women migrants, youth migrants, migrants displaced by climate change, migrants affected by detention, migrants of colour, etc.
- **Diverse expertise:** diversity of expertise is welcomed and included. Recognizing that not all individuals or organized migrant groups are equipped for advocacy, intentional engagement can with migrants with specialized skills and knowledge (for example in healthcare, education, social services, etc.) can enable invaluable insights, policy recommendations, and community-driven initiatives at regional and national levels.

- **Inclusivity:** facilitate policy discussion spaces that are accessible to all migrants, with particular attention to those in marginalized groups. Inclusivity requires interpretation of meetings and translation of documents in relevant languages as well as removing technical, administrative, and financial obstacles hindering migrant participation, and facilitating migrant engagement by offering visas and legal stay documents for relevant events.
- **Sustained and sustainable participation:** process that benefit both policymakers and affected communities and are designed to be ongoing and mutually useful. This entails adapting ongoing processes according to participant availability and ensuring comprehensive involvement across all stages, regardless of affiliation with an NGO or civil society group.
- **Safety and sensitivity to risk:** potential risks to safety and negative effects are actively considered and prevented or mitigated. Responsiveness and accountability are crucial when addressing adverse impacts resulting from engagement in the process.<sup>3</sup> Contact points should be shared for reporting and providing support in cases where individuals encounter any reprisals due to their engagement.
- **Transparency:** throughout the process migrants have clear, timely and informed understanding on how their participation will take place and its scope, purpose, and potential impact.

### *Promoting meaningful migrant participation in and through the GCM Regional Reviews*

The UN Network on Migration has provided a framework that includes a multi-stakeholder participatory approach for developing the format and content of the GCM Regional Reviews<sup>4</sup> and specific guidance on stakeholder engagement.<sup>5</sup> Building upon this and similar to the first round of reviews, the main considerations for those organizing the Regional Reviews are to ensure:

- **Transparency:** Generating an open call for engagement to all relevant stakeholders across sectors, countries, and sub-regions; providing an open and equal channel to receive inputs from all relevant stakeholders, including any relevant regional, preparatory, sectoral, and self-organized processes where stakeholders are engaging.
- **Inclusivity:** Creating room for the widest possible access for all relevant stakeholders through various forms of engagement involves considering physical or virtual capacity limitations. These limitations may include translating materials, providing access to funding for travel, ensuring sufficient time, and offering support for obtaining visas when needed. Genuine engagement should extend beyond mere attendance at the meetings themselves.
- **Diversity:** Ensuring non-discriminatory access to all, with particular attention to under-represented voices, including migrants themselves. Giving due consideration to the genuine engagement of all relevant stakeholders, every opportunity should be taken to support diversity of stakeholder participation, with particular emphasis on under-represented voices, including but not limited to women, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to religious, national, linguistic, and racial and ethnic minorities, migrants, diaspora, grassroots level actors, LGBTQIA+ migrants, indigenous peoples, low-income migrants and migrant workers, and others not associated with or organized in non-governmental organizations.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see the OHCHR work on reprisals: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/reprisals>

<sup>4</sup> Framework on the preparation and organization of the Regional Reviews of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, UN Network on Migration, March 2023, available at:

[https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources\\_files/Regional%20Reviews%20Framework.pdf](https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources_files/Regional%20Reviews%20Framework.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Stakeholder engagement in the second round of Regional Reviews of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, UN Network on Migration, May 2023, available at:

[https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources\\_files/Guidance%20on%20stakeholder%20engagement%20in%20the%202024%20Regional%20Reviews.pdf](https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources_files/Guidance%20on%20stakeholder%20engagement%20in%20the%202024%20Regional%20Reviews.pdf)

- **Meaningful participation:** All relevant stakeholders should have equal and effective access to all preparatory, follow-up, and review processes, including providing inputs to preparatory documents and agendas, as experts, panelists, and speakers in the regional review meetings, and having access to all side-events, spaces, and discussions. Encouraging the mobilization of resources to enable the meaningful participation of stakeholders, including capacity building, preparatory activities, and travel.

In alignment with this guidance, the Network plans to organize a multi-stakeholder consultation for each of the five regions.<sup>6</sup> These consultations offer a useful step towards meaningful participation, as they provide an opportunity to engage with migrants and should contribute inputs to the meetings of the corresponding Regional Economic Commission. Additionally, the Network plans to release a funding call primarily for travel expenses, supported by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund follow-up and review funding window, to facilitate the participation of stakeholders and least-developed countries.<sup>7</sup>

Migrant organizations and organized migrant groups should be supported to join the Regional Network Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism or Advisory Group in their region. These structures should provide a means for migrants to feed into the planning and delivery of the GCM Regional Reviews.

***Enabling actions by any entity convening meetings and events in the context of the Regional Reviews:***

The following enabling actions are suggested to help those convening, organising, and shaping the Regional Reviews to make the most of this opportunity and follow through on the commitments made in the Global Compact for Migration and the IMRF Progress Declaration.

- Facilitate inclusive policy discussion spaces to ensure accessibility, especially for those from marginalized groups (**Contribution, Consultation**)
- Engage in consultations with migrants while recognizing that barriers to their involvement can differ based on region or sector/income. (**Contribution, Consultation**)
- Consult with migrants to identify key topics for discussion, speakers, and formats that will facilitate participation. (**Contribution, Consultation**)
- Co-create regional review participation plans and strategies with migrants and migrant-led organizations. (**Cooperation and consensus-building, Decision-making, Partnership**)
- Establish dedicated funding mechanisms to ensure adequate resources for migrant participation in Regional Reviews, including budget allocations for travel, accommodation, translation, and related expenses. (**Cooperation and consensus-building, Partnership**)
- Ensure migrant organizations are members of each Regional Network Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism or Advisory Group and are actively engaged in regional review participation planning. (**Contribution, Consultation, Decision-making, Partnership**)
- Work with migrants to develop and implement guidelines for the meaningful participation of migrants in Regional Reviews in consultation with the Network secretariat at the global level to enable coherence across regions and to ensure that the guidelines are in line with international best practices. (**Cooperation and consensus-building, Decision-making, Partnership**)

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<sup>6</sup> Regional Reviews Framework, UN Network on Migration, March 2023, available at [https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources\\_files/Regional%20Reviews%20Framework.pdf](https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources_files/Regional%20Reviews%20Framework.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

- Ensure timely information sharing in relevant languages (**Information-sharing**), including through:
  - Organizing calls to brief on the process and answer questions;
  - Sending out e-bulletins
- Create greater opportunities, platforms, or dialogue spaces for migrants to share their policy and process recommendations, experiences, expertise, and perspectives. (**Contribution, Consultation, Cooperation and consensus-building**), for example:
  - Provide platforms for briefings by migrants and migrant-led organizations on specific topics;
  - Enable side events and set aside a minimum number of spaces for migrant-led events;
  - Hold preparatory meetings for migrants to share priorities.
- Provide training and capacity-building opportunities for example through leadership development, workshops, and peer learning exchanges. (**Information-sharing, Partnership**)
- Establish a Migrant Advisory Council (or similar consultative body) to provide a platform for sustained and sustainable migrant participation in the design, delivery, and follow-up of the Regional Reviews. (**Decision-making, Transformation**)
  - Foster an interactive process within the consultative body to create and enhance advisory processes that facilitate a diversity of participation, including through mechanisms such as rotating membership.
- Work with migrants and migrant-led organizations to develop indicators/metrics to measure meaningful participation and use these to assess the regional review and learn lessons for the next round of reviews. (**Cooperation and consensus-building, Decision-making**)
- Make regional and national pledges on migrant participation during Regional Reviews. (**Consultation, Cooperation and consensus-building, Partnership**)
- Provide a regular update on activities recommended by migrants and actions taken in response to their recommendations. (**Information-sharing, Consultation, Cooperation and consensus-building**)

***Enabling actions by Member States:***

- Promote sharing information about the regional review widely and in relevant languages, along with updates on multilateral developments. (**Information-sharing**)
- Facilitate the participation of migrants in policy process by providing funds and resources for migrant participation, including ensuring the allocation of sufficient human and financial resources to prioritize consultations and coordination with migrants. (**Contribution**)
- Engage at local and national levels with migrants to ensure their expertise, experiences, priorities, and policy recommendations are reflected and presented in Member State interventions in Regional Reviews. (**Contribution, Information-sharing, Consultation, Cooperation and consensus-building, Partnership**)
- Hold national consultation processes with migrants to determine the State's topics of priority for the Regional Reviews. (**Consultation, Cooperation and consensus-building**)
- Draw on national participation mechanisms or establish advisory groups or other mechanisms to provide input on national priorities for the Regional Reviews (**Contribution, Cooperation and consensus-building**)

- Include government officials with lived experience of migration as members of or advisers to Member State delegations. (**Contribution, Consultation, Partnership, Transformation**)
- Include migrants in Member State delegations for relevant meetings and events. (**Cooperation and consensus-building, Decision-making, Partnership**)
- Champion meaningful migrant participation in statements, pledges, and interventions (jointly or in statements in a national capacity), including in the agenda exploration on how to further migrant participation through the sharing of best practices. (**Partnership**)
- Create spaces in formal and informal meetings related to the Regional Reviews to discuss how to improve migrant inclusivity through practice-sharing (**Partnership**)

This briefing paper is part of QUNO's ongoing work on migration justice. This work is grounded in a [Quaker Statement on Migration](#) and includes a focus on centring migrant expertise and experience by enhancing meaningful migrant participation.

This paper benefitted from the comments of several partners from migrant-led organizations, NGOs, the UN and Member States. We thank them for their time and insightful inputs.

Our previous briefing paper on enhancing meaningful migrant participation through the IMRF is here: [https://quno.org/sites/default/files/resources/Migration Justice paper 4 .pdf](https://quno.org/sites/default/files/resources/Migration%20Justice%20paper%204.pdf).

For further information or to share comments and reflections on this paper please contact the Human Rights and Refugees Programme at QUNO: Laurel Townhead, Representative, ltownhead@quno.ch and Yasmin Beldjelti, Programme Assistant, ybeldjelti@quno.ch