



Major Group for
Children and Youth
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GFMD Youth Forum 2021 Outcome Documents

Thematic RT 1: The Governance of Labour Migration in the Context of Changing Employment Landscapes

The following youth priorities were discussed during the aforementioned thematic session at the 2021 Migration Youth Forum:

1. Regularizing the Pathway for Migrant Workers (facilitating labour mobility through efficient legal channels)

Issues discussed majorly bordered on:

- The expensive and seemingly protracted procedure to apply for or renew work/travel permits (e.g. Visas, passports) including a complicated and expensive process of recognition/verification of academic, skill sets or work documentation
- A noticeable pattern of host countries relying on decisions of other countries' embassies (within the EU) to determine whether or not to grant applications for migration
- Recruitment and safety of migrant workers in the context of the COVID-19, i.e., restrictions placed by destination countries on free movement of migrant workers coming from regions that are considered heavily affected by COVID-19 (e.g. the United States, Italy, United Kingdom or Spain)

Recommendations:

In response to the issues discussed, the following recommendations were made:

- Improved dissemination of information and heightened awareness on the process of migration (through youth-led organizations) including information relating to visa/work permit applications.

We discovered that many youth migrants are unaware of the actual procedure for migrant application and rely on stories/experiences of others. As a result, they are overwhelmed prior to their application and are dissuaded from exploring legal channels of migration and would rather opt for illegal channels. We also discovered many youth migrant workers are unaware that they could request a review of their application result at little or no additional cost. The dissemination of this information could greatly deter many migrant applicants whose applications have been denied from consequently considering illegal means of migrating.

- It was also recommended that there should be regional cooperation amongst relevant governmental ministries (e.g. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal & Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour etc.) of both the home and destination countries to facilitate regional recognition of academic certificates and skillsets.

Such regional cooperation automatically reduces the additional cost that would have otherwise been incurred by migrant workers in paying for third-party verification of certificates, skill sets and other required documentation.

- Youth-led organizations to advocate for the eradication of bureaucracies involved labour migration. This will involve youth-led associations to sensitize staff of embassies and stakeholder ministries on the importance of labour migration, why the same should be facilitated, international best practices for reviewing migrant worker applications (including granting or denying the application).
- Youth-led advocacy for government policies that will facilitate efficient regional mobility through prompt grant or renewal of Visas/Work Permits especially in countries like Kenya, Visas/Work Permits on Arrival (where VISAs are compulsory)
- Youth-led advocacy for government policies that will promote the rights of migrant workers including access to health care pending the completion of the process of regularization, fair recruitment opportunities for migrant workers as well as assistance programs that mediate between migrant workers and their employers
- Government-regulated pricing and compulsory testing of youth migrants for COVID-19 and issuance of internationally recognized COVID-19 certificates to aid unrestricted flow of labour between countries.
- Youth-led advocacy for bilateral arrangements that will open up legal migration paths for all skill levels including exchange programs between the home and destination countries.

Location

- The above highlighted issues and recommendations were made generally in respect of most countries. However, the following countries were particularly mentioned: Venezuela, Nigeria, Mexico, Italy, Pakistan, Brazil, Cuba, South Africa, Poland, Ukraine, Chile.

Identifiable Partners/Stakeholders:

- Youth-led associations and civil societies in destination and home countries
- Ministries of Education, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Embassies, Ministry of Labour in both home and destination countries
- Low-cost academic or skill training institutions (Government/Private/Non-Profit) which can offer affordable and worldwide accredited programs which require no further third-party verification

Proposed Next Steps:

- Identify and liaise with relevant youth-led associations and civil societies to ensure proper dissemination of information regarding the process of migrant applications to local communities
- Strategize on escalating the issue of regional cooperation to the relevant governmental stakeholders and academic/skill training institutions

2. Health and Psychological Welfare of Migrant Workers (emphasis on the COVID-19 situation)

Issues discussed majorly bordered on:

- Mental anxiety occasioned by long term quarantine measures and restriction of youth migrant workers in returning to their home country to reunite with family
- Discriminatory labelling from the Venezuelan regime to Venezuelan migrants as “biological weapons” in their decision to return home.
- Increase in domestic violence and mental abuse of Haitian and Venezuelan migrant workers based in the Dominican Republic as a result of elongated quarantine measures
- Ongoing xenophobia by citizens of host countries against youth migrant workers due to the flawed perception that migrant workers will cause a depletion in the resources of the host countries. These migrant workers have now fallen victim to fake news and hate speeches.
- Hesitation of migrant youth workers to seek medical attention for fear of deportation as a result of the uncertainties surrounding their legal status in the host country.
- Inability of youth migrant workers to adequately quarantine and observe COVID-19 precautionary measures due to their unfavourable pre-existing living conditions especially those living in refugee shelters or projects

Recommendations

In response to the issues discussed, the following recommendations were made:

- **Anonymous 24/7 toll-free hotlines to report incidences of violence against youth migrant workers** or COVID-19 symptoms experienced by youth migrant workers with a guarantee of data protection of those affected migrant workers whose legal status remains uncertain.
- **Foreign workers consultation centers (established by the government, non-profit or civil societies/youth-led organizations) in each local government to provide aid regarding mental health, legal consultations for labour disputes and immediate shelters etc.**

- **Government hotlines in an additional language(s) to raise awareness and provide detailed information regarding COVID-19 to migrant workers and how the pandemic is likely to affect their health as well as welfare/solutions available**
- **Youth-led capacity building in respective communities to promote inter-community dialogue and raise awareness against xenophobic tendencies** and prevent discriminatory labelling of migrant workers as “biological weapons”.
- Youth-led advocacy for **inclusiveness** of migrant workers in healthcare and welfare packages irrespective of their legal status. *Focus: Health for one, is health for all.*
- Youth-led advocacy to persuade the Government to establish policies that incentivize employers to provide health and psychological support (e.g. psychological consultations) to youth migrant workers during these times
- Youth-led associations to effectively monitor the efficient disbursement of grants, aids and other welfare packages assigned to youth migrant workers and identifiable channels for reporting suspicious or fraudulent activities
- Mandatory testing of migrant workers at government-regulated prices to ensure that as many migrant workers are tested for COVID-19 to mitigate the rapid spread of the virus in their living quarters

Location

- The above highlighted issues and recommendations were made generally in respect of most countries. However, the following countries were particularly mentioned: Taiwan, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Haiti, South Africa, Mozambique, Pakistan etc.

Identifiable Partners/Stakeholders:

- Youth-led associations and civil societies in destination and home countries
- Ministries of Health, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Labour in both home and destination countries

Proposed Next Steps:

- Identify and liaise with the relevant youth-led associations to ensure inter-community dialogue and raise awareness on the health and psychological welfare of migrant workers