

## **Youth Consultations in Asia & the Pacific for the Bali Process - GFMD Regional Meeting**

In the vision for its Chairmanship of the [Global Forum on Migration and Development](#) (GFMD) over the course of 2020, the UAE sets out a commitment to fostering a year-long process. To that end, the Asia & Pacific- GFMD Regional Meetings have been proposed to take place in June 2020. These Regional Meetings are designed to encourage the incorporation of more local and regional perspectives into the background papers, for discussion by GFMD participants at the end-of-year Summit, as well as stimulating the formation of partnerships on relevant issues. The focused on the following themes: Leveraging Technology to Empower Migrants, Addressing Gaps in Migrant Protection, Discussing Approaches to Irregular Migration.

The United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) led an open Asia & Pacific regional consultation on youth perspectives and priorities on these three topics, for which we consulted 22 locally-based youth-led and youth-focused organizations with national or international focus, acting in 10 countries, and representing over 31,000 young leaders in migration issues. The results of these consultations are summarized in the policy briefs contained in this document.

UN MGCY's Asia & Pacific Focal Points then brought these key issues and voices to the Bali Process - GFMD process. They participated and co-organized the civil society consultations before the Bali Process - GFMD event. They will now participate in the main Bali Process - GFMD Forum, representing in all breakout sessions, ensuring youth voices are heard at the highest levels and taken into consideration when identifying priorities and designing solutions.

For any questions or to be included in the mapped youth-focused and youth-led organizations and networks, please email [migrationfp@unmgcy.org](mailto:migrationfp@unmgcy.org)

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## Leveraging Technology to Empower Migrants: Policy Brief on Youth Perspectives in Asia and the Pacific

32% of the world's international migrants live in the Asia and Pacific region, with 7 of the top 10 remittance-receiving countries are in the region.<sup>1</sup> Technological advances have the potential to greatly improve the livelihoods of Asian and Pacific migrants, however these benefits are likely to be unevenly experienced across the region due to differences in access to technology and the internet. Following the timely announcement of “Leveraging technology to empower migrants” as a key theme of the Bali Process consultation process, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) led consultations across the Asia and Pacific region on youth perspectives and priorities on this topic. We consulted 22 youth-led and/or youth-focused organisations ranging from grassroots projects to national advocacy groups, acting in 10 countries, and representing over 31,000 young migrants and/or youth involved in migration issues. The results of these consultations are summarised in this policy brief.

### Key Youth-led and Youth Focused Projects

Youth have been at the forefront of leveraging technology to empower migrants, including through:

- Empowering both underprivileged migrant youth and workers through digital literacy and educational programs, as well as providing access to educational resources;
- Using technological solutions to provide education to young migrants barred from formal schooling;
- Utilising social media and messaging apps as platforms for advocacy, social integration, promoting events and distribution of public health resources;
- Conducting social network information campaigns, as well as awareness raising through media channels, in order to shape positive narratives on migration, promote self-representation, inclusion, and recognition in society.
- Incorporating migrants as key decision-makers and user design participants into tech-development programs

### Policy Recommendations for Governments and other International/Regional Actors

**Youth calls on the government to implement policies that will remove all barriers to technology.** Needed actions include: ensuring the recognition of UNHCR identification as qualification for essential tech provisions, engaging with private sector stakeholders to ensure basic hardware, software and internet is provided in ways that are practical and intuitive for the migrant community, allowing the purchase or receipt of mobile plans without official identification or bank accounts, and facilitate access to hardware such as mobile phones, reliable internet connections, and charging facilities. Removing barriers to access technology is necessary to promote capacity building, facilitate the economic integration of migrant youth and workers, and improve their and their families' livelihoods, as well as to ensure their ability to communicate with each other, their families, and the host community.

**Youth calls on governments to fund and support the scaling of practical, accessible, and technology-based educational programmes and platforms that work to address gaps in key areas such as digital literacy and formal schooling.** Currently, migrant youth disproportionately experience barriers to access quality and stable education, due to issues such as language barriers, irregular access to electricity and environments suitable to study, as well as irregular migrants being barred from accessing formal education. It is important that barriers to access these benefits are removed, and that key stakeholders enable these solutions to be developed with the participation of young migrants. **Youth have been creating such platforms - but we need the support and funding of other stakeholders to scale and increase our reach.**

**Finally, youth calls on all stakeholders, to support, include, and/or amplify young migrant voices in the development of products, programmes and/or initiatives** This includes: amplifying the voices of young migrants in social media and traditional media to challenge negative stereotypes and promote social inclusion, creating policies and frameworks to promote youth representation in government-led initiatives, and involving them in the co-creation of policies, products, and projects. This is a role that all stakeholders can play - including national and local governments, private sector, and NGOs. Youth are sharing their voices, are already including migrants as co-creator of their initiatives, and are amplifying their voices in campaigns. **We stand available to exchange best practices and help identify the appropriate young stakeholders.**

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<sup>1</sup> 'Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Information 2019 Information Sheet', International Organisation for Migration.

## **Addressing Gaps in Migration Protection: Policy Brief on Youth Perspectives in Asia and the Pacific**

32% of the world's international migrants live in the Asia and Pacific region, with 7 of the top 10 remittance-receiving countries are in the region.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, an overarching gap in migrant protection exists in the access to social services and justice, protection in labour agreements and in the informal economy, as well as in the many risks associated with the conditions of transit. Following the announcement of “Addressing Gaps in Migrant Protection” as a key theme of the Bali Process consultation process, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) led consultations across the Asia and Pacific region on youth perspectives and priorities on this topic. We consulted 22 youth-led and/or youth-focused organisations ranging from grassroots projects to national advocacy groups, acting in 10 countries, and representing over 31,000 young migrants and/or youth involved in migration issues. The results of these consultations are summarised in this policy brief.

### **Key Youth-led and Youth Focused Projects**

Youth have been at the forefront of addressing gaps in migrant protection, including through:

- Programmes addressing gaps in accessing employment opportunities, education, housing, and basic health resources.
- Programmes at the forefront of providing support during COVID-19, including lobbying for employment protection, and providing access to hygiene, clothes, healthcare, food, and mental health support.
- Campaigns raising awareness of the social exclusion of migrant youth and children in society.
- Advocacy for the inclusion of migrants and internally displaced people (IDPs) in policy development, and in programs run by governments and/or in partnership with other stakeholders including the private sector.
- Provision of capacity-building and training for youth and womxn migrants at both the grassroots, national, regional, and international levels.
- Building targeted advocacy campaigns through partnerships with multiple stakeholders, including encouraging social integration with host communities in order to avoid conflict.
- Campaigns raising awareness around migration-related risks, such as trafficking and modern slavery.

### **Policy Recommendations for Governments and other International/Regional Actors**

**Youth call on governments of destination countries to develop and strictly enforce transparent labour laws that protect the rights of migrant youth and workers, including ensuring that minimum wages and working conditions are respected, as well as their access to basic protection and services such as healthcare and education, regardless of migratory status.** Such regulations need to be combined with the monitoring and evaluation of labour policies that consider gendered challenges. Furthermore, these policies should provide tangible support for emergency response projects, such as those seen during COVID-19, that provide migrants as well as nationals with physical and mental healthcare and income support, and advocate for no-layoffs policies. Youth projects have been working to address such gaps, but we need the support and funding of other stakeholders to ensure these efforts are effective and sustainable.

**Youth calls on host countries to improve data collection efforts on migrant workers, youth migrants and expectant migrant mothers, including the disaggregation of human development index indicators and the inclusion of families of migrants still in home countries.** The current pandemic has put many Asian governments under pressure to commit supporting vulnerable groups, and data-based diagnosis is essential to promote accurate and effective public policies and ensure migrants are not left behind. Importantly, care should be taken that it does not come with repercussions to those surveyed.

**Youth calls on countries of origin to work with destination countries to protect migrants and their families from exploitation, provide education around dangers during transit and settlement, and to extend eligibility for existing support programmes for vulnerable populations.** Examples of needed agreements include the implementation of bilateral partnerships to regulate agency fees and other added costs; programs providing education protecting against trafficking and modern slavery; and safe and effective repatriation programs that facilitate safe transit and sustainable integration. These policies should be developed through a collaborative partnership between origin and destination countries for maximum efficacy, and will be crucial in protecting migrants, their families, and unaccompanied migrant youth from the distress and suffering seen during unprecedented crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Information 2019 Information Sheet’, International Organisation for Migration.

## Discussing Approaches to Address Irregular Migration: *Policy Brief on Youth Perspectives in Asia and the Pacific*

The Asia and Pacific region currently holds 3.5 million irregular migrants, 1.9 million IDPs, and 1.4 million stateless people.<sup>3</sup> With over half of the region not party to the Geneva Convention or Protocol<sup>4</sup>, the issue of irregular migration is of particular concern. Following the announcement of “Discussing approaches to address irregular migration” as a key theme of the Bali Process consultation process, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) led consultations across the Asia and Pacific region on youth perspectives and priorities on this topic. We consulted 22 youth-led and/or youth-focused organisations ranging from grassroots projects to national advocacy groups, acting in 10 countries, and representing over 31,000 young migrants and/or youth involved in migration issues. The results of these consultations are summarised in this policy brief.

### Key Youth-led and Youth Focused Projects

Youth have been at the forefront of responding to irregular migration concerns, including through:

- Campaigns addressing xenophobia around irregular migration amongst host communities.
- Campaigns raising awareness of, and protection against, irregular migrant labour issues, including trafficking and exploitation.
- Initiatives addressing gaps in education provision, including providing access to legal information, technology, and community and mental health support.
- Social enterprises and initiatives that empower irregular migrants to utilise their capabilities for income and community support.
- Projects addressing the negative effects of protracted displacement, including preserving native languages, and addressing the mental health and developmental effects from lack of recognition by local society.
- Advocacy campaigns for the rights and state recognition of unregistered and undocumented migrants, as well as for an international framework to discuss and develop coordinated approaches preventing the persecution that cause migration and displacement.

### Policy Recommendations for Governments and other International/Regional Actors

**Youth calls on governments to create space within current regional processes in order to address the causes of irregular migration.** This is imperative to ensure that we can mitigate drivers of irregular migration, and thus diminish irregular migration trends as well as exposure to risks during the journey and on arrival, such as human trafficking, exploitation, and criminalization. Youth are at the forefront of awareness-raising and advocacy programmes, but these are insufficient without complementary local and regional efforts.

Further, **youth calls on governments to create regular pathways for irregular migrants to be able to integrate socially and economically into host communities.** This will allow migrants’ potential to be realized in the labour market and meaningfully contribute to the local economy, as well as have access to basic protection and fulfillment of human rights, such as education, healthcare, food, shelter, and protection against domestic violence, abuse, and exploitation. Numerous youth projects are working towards community and labour integration, as well as addressing education gaps, but need further support from other stakeholders. An important step is to establish regular paths of progression towards naturalisation for migrants that are stateless and/or in protracted displacement situations, for instance through the implementation of a credible identification system such as the enforced recognition of UNHCR cards, and an accountable justice system. Importantly, this will allow not just for further youth empowerment, but also for new contributions to local society and markets.

**Youth also calls on governments, private sector, and/or civil society stakeholders to support and invest resources into co-created programs that promote positive narratives around all migrants, and support their empowerment within host societies.** As youth, we stand ready to exchange best practices and collaborate on these existing programmes, including awareness/conflict resolution and advocacy media campaigns as well as empowering entrepreneurship programs, that not only foster understanding between host and migrant communities, mitigating conflict and exploitation, but also preserve and celebrate cultural and language identity, as well as create opportunities for both host and migrant youth.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR Asia and the Pacific Webpage. <https://www.unhcr.org/asia-and-the-pacific.html> [Accessed online]

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, Savitri. ‘Refugee Protection in the Asia Pacific Region’, Refugee Legal Aid Information. <http://www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org/refugee-protection-asia-pacific-region> [Accessed online]