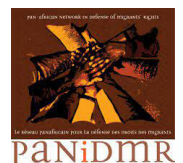


Policy Paper

Influencing migration policy narratives through the GFMD process: African State and Non-State Actors

Paddy Siyanga Knudsen, Mbemba Jabbi, Dr Iman Ahmed and Hakima Haithar



Contribution to discussions at the GFMD summit 2024

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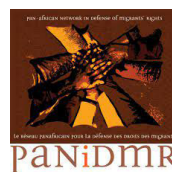


Policy Paper

Influencing migration policy narratives through the GFMD process: African State and Non-State Actors

In submission for GFMD RT5 Draft background paper

Authors: Paddy Siyanga Knudsen, Mbemba Jabbi, Dr Iman Ahmed and Hakima Haithar



Foreword

By the African non-state actors platform on GFMD/GCM

Culture and narratives is one of the priorities of the Global Forum on Migration & Development (GFMD)

Chairmanship, with Roundtable 5 centred on: “Improving the perception migration in public opinion through narratives, culture, emotion and rational discourse.” Led by Canada and the Philippines, the RT has a background paper and global outlook as its key outputs and throughout the GMD 2023 process, the co-chairs have been intentional about bringing in civil society contributions through the call for comments and preparatory meetings feedback.

From the onset, the African non-state actors platform was deliberate and pragmatic in their engagement in the roundtable discussions. It was during the first preparatory meeting that the gap on covering Africa as a region was noted. Representatives echoed the need for a more comprehensive picture on narratives through the thematic experts and also meetings were arranged with the co-chairs and penholder which resulted in co-chairs granting drafting space in the background paper to civil society partners.

This was welcomed as progressive and encouraging with the platform seeking support from its members to undertake this important contribution to the GFMD output.

This paper represents a fuller policy brief covering the aspects on the role of diaspora in shaping narratives and culture. The platform would like to thank the drafting team for sharing their expertise and knowledge as well as the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) FMCC for the financial and morale support in continuously walking alongside the African civil society in shaping its own agenda in global migration discourse. Special mention to the co-chairs of GRTS, Alexandra-Lund and the Philippines, Jet, for the open door.

This policy brief reflects the views of the African non-state actors group that brought together essential inputs on the role of diasporas as well as African migration narratives. Comments were sorted from the group members and this version includes their extensive comments.

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Back to 2007 - the role of the African non-state actors

The term Non-State Actor (NSA) is considered to encompass the three main categories of:

- Trade unions
- Civil society organisations
- Diaspora organisations

Before going back nearly two decades to where civil society rooted its engagement in the GFMD process, it is important to note that the African Non-State actors platform on GFMD and GCM came together, in 2023, as a result of a gap in the coordination of African actors that work on migration and development, in the context of the GFMD and the Global Compact on Migration (GCM). It was during the sidelines of the 2022 International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) that the platform was cemented and co-led by African leaders bringing together civil society organisations, diaspora and trade unions in a voluntary and informal space to formally engage in the GFMD process through its Civil Society Mechanism.

Who are Non-state actors (NSAs)?

This policy brief adopts the following definitions of **trade unions** from the constitution of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (ITUC - Constitution, as amended in 2023), specifically focusing on The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa). (ITUC - Africa)

Civil Society organizations defined as actors who work on the continent on migration and development;

Diaspora in its diversity of interpretations from African Union of "people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union to IOM's definition of transnational communities or ...descendants of migrants, whose identity and sense of belonging have been shaped by their migration experience and background.

The GMD has three mechanisms that cover civil society

(all above included), private sector (known as business mechanism) and mayors.

A wider definition of NSAs encompasses all the above except for mayors and local authorities, given their ties to state functions and structures. It includes academia, think-tanks and other institutions.

Stock and reflection of non-state actors role in GFMD spaces and processes

Taking a step back to reflect on the early years of civil society participation in the GFMD, the scene is in Bamako bringing together organisations and actors that work on migration and focussed on migrants' rights. The idea was to seek a common position and voice to take to regional and continental forums, as well as to seek ways to participate in these global events to ensure grassroots voices were integrated. This gave rise to the Pan African Network in Defense of Migrants' Rights (PANiDMR), hosted by the Institute for Research and Promotion of Alternatives in Development (IRPAD), which took on the coordinating role of gathering actors across the continent for the inaugural GFMD in Brussels in 2007 and, since then, subsequent summits.

On the side of the diaspora, participation in the GFMD goes back to the inaugural GFMD in Brussels, with networks such as Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT) and the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) having taken the roles of co-chairs and rapporteurs in the various GFMD processes (2014, 2017, 2019) for consistent African diaspora engagement.

Trade unions, mainly represented by the global confederation, lagged behind their non-state actor counterparts. Only recently was ITUC-Africa granted a seat and kept in the loop of the GFMD process through the Civil Society Mechanism and now as co-organiser of the African platform.

In terms of the GFMD summit, African actors have represented networks in all 13 summits held since Brussels in 2007 as well as actively present in civil society days and deliberations of the GFMD. In terms of rapporteurs, some have played a role in GFMD in 2014, 2017, 2019. Throughout the years, PANiDMR,

AFFORD and ADEPT are among those networks that have coordinated the participation of African civil society at the various GFMD events and through its GFMD Civil Society Days.



Non-state actors as drivers of change

In terms of results, through the [GFMD Civil Society Mechanism](#) (GFMD CSM), civil society, including and especially migrants and diaspora, contributed to shaping the GFMD's agenda and outcomes as highlighted above. African civil society participation in its limited capacity has influenced the GFMD process as well as the GCM in 2017 and 2018 by having issues affecting the continent being tabled such as regularisation and the diaspora. These continue to feature prominently on the migration and development agenda. Through civil society preparatory meetings and consultations leading to each year's GFMD Summit, the African actors are visible at the table.

The inclusion of the Civil Society Mechanism in the GFMD's Steering Group early last year, and the channels for civil society participation in all GFMD events now, further solidify civil society's full inclusion and engagement in all aspects of the GFMD's organisation and activities. More concretely, a number of African leaders from Non State Actors (NSA) are members of the International Steering Committee (ISC) of the GFMD CSM which steers inputs into the GFMD process.

Although the participation has been consistent, it has been limited in scope and coverage of diverse actors. In parallel, there has been a shift in participation from individual support to collective support, leveraging on the benefits of a more organised civil society and joint efforts. The most recent and most prominent collective effort

is the African platform on GFMD, which came together in 2022 and physically met in Nigeria in early 2023 to shape its collective voice: [The Abuja Declaration](#). It also launched the official civil society process for the GFMD. From Abuja, the platform continues to informally engage its members methodically towards the official GFMD process through collaboration with the GFMD CSM and other supporters. The Abuja Declaration collective recommendations to states and partners also offer an opportunity for proactive engagement and collaboration among civil society, trade unions and the diaspora. From Abuja, a roadmap for engagement was crafted organically through the subgroup interests being brought into the GFMD Thematic Workshops on Culture, and Narratives and Human Mobility, on [Climate and Human Mobility](#), and on [Engaging Diasporas in Climate Action](#) as well as preparatory meetings towards the 14th GFMD Summit in Geneva.

In view of the next GFMD and in light of influencing its agenda, it is important to draw on the comradery and leadership of African non-state actors, collectively. These actors are a critical element of the institutional memory of global civil society engagement as well as participation of African member states in the GFMD process since its inception in 2007.

Governments as instruments for enhanced engagement: civil society space

Since its inception in 2007, the GFMD has had several member states take turns as chair and co-chair at the top of its leadership. Each Chair brought its style and approach to engagement with other non-state actors. It was under Switzerland in 2011 that the civil society mechanism was put in place with ICMC hosting its secretariat, with continued support to the present day. Other countries have also been instrumental in financing the CS mechanism. In 2011, the Swiss allowed civil society to design its own focus areas and programs of activities within the GFMD process and two joint reflection sessions between governments and civil society resulting in the GFMD Civil Society days.

It was under the chairmanship of the Philippines that the civil society days were brought to life as part of the GFMD Summit providing an opportunity for civil society to feel connected and recognised as an essential wing of

the stakeholders. Early, in 2008, the Philippines was the first to provide an expansion on the range of stakeholders and sectoral representation.

In the current GFMD process, 4 of 12 thematic experts of the Government-led Round Tables (GRTs) are held by African non-state actor leaders and these have been instrumental in bringing issues of concern for Africa and beyond, given their extensive role. Further, for the GRT 5 on culture and narratives, the Philippines and Canada, as co-chairs, are commended for their efforts in creating space for African civil society to co-draft a section of the background paper, with relevant inputs on the role of diaspora in shaping narratives and culture leaning on African perspective (see policy paper 1).

Centring the role of African states

The GFMD is a state-led process and migration management lies in the hands of governments. As such, effective engagement requires governments' commitment and willingness at all levels: headquarters (HQ), embassies, agencies, as well as all stakeholders in the GFMD process. The critical focus is building relationships, fostering communication, and actively participating in relevant activities.

In terms of chairmanship of the GFMD, so far Mauritius chaired the GFMD in 2012, and Morocco co-chaired the GFMD in 2017-2018 alongside Germany. For the first time since its inception, the 2023 GFMD co-chairmanship was initially shared with Sub-Saharan Africa, with Senegal sharing the role with France. This was an opportune time for coordinated and well-organised engagement from African non-state actors to bring the hotbed of thematic issues and dynamics of intra- and inter-regional migration to the global discourse. It also presented an opportunity to engage with government actors, at all levels, in national and regional dialogue, throughout the GFMD process. Unfortunately, Senegal did not stay on course for joint leadership of the GFMD. However, the African platform communicated its need for African stewardship on critical issues and pursued other co-chairs of thematic roundtables namely Kenya (RT 6 - multilevel governance); Zimbabwe (RT4 - labour migration), and Egypt (RT2 - rights and migration). Initially, Benin was part of the co-leads.

Working partnerships: Morocco in duo-chairmanship

Morocco co-chaired the Global Forum with Germany from 2017 to 2018, which was the first since GMD inception in 2007 at the UN General Assembly, where a declaration was made advocating the development of a Global Compact on Migration. The joint Chairmanship linked two regions, Africa and Europe at a time when migration issues were on top of the political agenda in large parts of the world, just two years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with clear migration-specific and migration-related goals.

The exemplary involvement of Morocco in the cooperation with Germany took the lead in highlighting the positive aspects of migration as well as sounding the call to address and balance the interests of migrants and their countries of origin, transit states, and destinations within the framework of promoting safe, regular and orderly migration. The symbolic bridging of the Mediterranean sent a strong signal for the further development of global migration objectives.

The Eleventh Meeting of the GMD held in Marrakesh discussed issues concerning the theme of "Honouring International Commitments to Unlock the Potential of all Migrants for Development" (GFMD 2017-2018). The Summit was attended by over 1000 international participants from roughly 130 governments and 40 observer organisations. The Marrakesh Forum had also an important focus, which was on the Forum's contribution to the first-ever United Nations Global Compact on Migration (GCM which was adopted by the community of states in December 2018 as an important cornerstone of the GMD process.

From our observation of the outreach by African actors to co-chairs individually, through the sidelines of preparatory meetings and workshops as well as engaging in other related forums, there are some suggested actions that enhance the capacity of state actors to participate in an effective manner in the GFMD process.

These include:

- ▶ Support all stakeholders to understand and familiarise themselves with the GFMD process, its goals, and the specific themes or topics under discussion. This will help them to tailor the



engagement strategy to align with the forum's objectives. Collaboration with civil society organisations that are active in the migration and development space is critical. Many governments value input from civil society and working together with Civil Society Organisations (CSO) can enhance their credibility and impact.

- Identify key contacts within government headquarters, embassies, and relevant agencies who are responsible for migration-related issues. This may include officials from ministries of foreign affairs, immigration, labour, or other relevant departments. Reach out to key contacts through official channels, such as email or formal letters, expressing your interest in engaging with them on migration and development issues within the context of the GFMD. Highlight the potential benefits of collaboration.
- Actively participate in GFMD meetings, forums, and side events. These gatherings provide opportunities to network with government representatives and engage in discussions on migration related challenges and solutions. Make sure to attend events related to the specific themes you are interested in. Governments often seek input from various stakeholders, including non-governmental entities, during the GFMD process. Submit relevant proposals, research findings, or policy suggestions that align with the forum's agenda.
- Engage in consultations or working groups organised by the GFMD, actively participate in them. This is an opportunity to directly engage with government representatives and contribute to the

development of policies and initiatives. Some GFMD processes involve regional consultations. Attend these events to engage with governments at a regional level, understand regional perspectives, and establish connections. Advocate for inclusivity in the GFMD process. Encourage governments to involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including civil society, in discussions and decision-making processes. Leverage social media and online platforms to engage with government officials, share relevant information, and participate in virtual discussions related to migration and development.

Spotlight on countries using GFMD process to tackle migration challenges

Through the 2030 Agenda, governments universally agreed to reduce inequality within and among countries (Goal 10). As part of this equality agenda, in target 10.7 the commitment is made 'to facilitate safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of well-managed migration policies'. The Global Compact for Migration adopted in 2018 at the Morocco Forum includes numerous commitments for governments to protect the safety, dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms of migrants, including through the promotion of ethical labour mobility, access to education for migrant children, more search and rescue mechanisms to save lives and many more, but very few have fulfilled their commitment. However, many other governments and countries have provided information to migrants to get access

to education, health, and employment, other countries have created opportunities for migrants and diaspora to actively engage in cultural exchanges, information sharing, and in educational activities to promote their countries of origin to people in their host countries to facilitate integration and inclusion of migrants.

Getting things done - Best practices on joint actions

Engagement with African member states in multilevel frameworks is a good strategy for global south buy-in and commitment of state actors in the Global South. At the request of the African platform, a thematic workshop on “unpacking the GFMD process for the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) members states of Africa and non-state actors including the diaspora” was hosted by OACPS and held on the 6th of November 2023. It was an opportunity for state and non-state actors to exchange on the GFMD process, figure strategies for enhanced collaboration on priority areas as well as to make concrete recommendations for the



active participation of all stakeholders in the realisation of the GFMD objectives.

The stakeholders at the workshop agreed to take a few recommendations to be shared to OACPS internal processes, starting with its relevant subcommittees, on:

- The repositioning of the social and economic contribution of migrants and diaspora through remittances, investment, philanthropic initiatives as well as contributions in host countries, as a game changer in shaping narratives of migrants, recognising the link to member states' role in enhancing legal pathways, decent work, and social protection.
- Adopt a multi-layer approach that includes civil society actors in balancing the narrative on migrants and migration conscious of the evidence, role of media, technology, and information networks emphasising the human stories of African migrants, showing their individual stories, talents, and resilience.
- Re-prioritise an African focus on heritage and culture as part of our global history, linking the diaspora to countries of origin and amplifying their cultural capital in sustaining the cultural heritage of their countries and regions of origin.
- Promote the engagement of the diaspora that consider the importance of generational links through mapping and engagement of multigenerational diaspora; focus on preserving African culture; contributing to the cultural mosaic of host societies; and recognise the important contributions of second and subsequent generations of diasporas in all areas of their engagement efforts.

In terms of the restitution agenda, the African Union Commission and Assembly of Heads of States of the AU with other non-state actors are finding their voice in the migration and displacement space by addressing the issue of reparations for Africa. It is estimated that 12.5 million Africans were kidnapped and sold into slavery between the 15th and 19th century. The effects include economic inequality; political instability; cultural disintegration; and psychological trauma. A conference held in Accra, Ghana from the 14th to the 17th November 2023 under the theme: “Building a United Front to Advance the Cause of Justice and the Payment of Reparations to Africa” is pushing for reparatory justice.

The conference decided on the set up of an African reparations fund. The fund would benefit victims and survivors of forced migration, displacement, and trafficking. The reparations would go beyond direct financial payments to include developmental aid for

countries, the return of colonised resources and the systemic correction of oppressive policies and laws that continue to exacerbate forced migration in Africa. A recent report from the UN further supports this cause noting the continued impacts of enslavement and colonisation and the need for reparations. Countries such as Ethiopia and Ghana are cited for their instrumental role in harnessing its resources and the diaspora to support the restitution agenda. This is covered in the background paper on the GRT 5. Further, at the GFMD Workshop on culture held in June 2023, critical points were raised on the implementation of the restitution agenda and the role of countries of origin in adhering to set arrangements.

Further, cross-regional initiatives are another avenue for synergy building on matters of common interest in terms of influencing the GFMD agenda. Coordinated by the GFMD CS mechanism, the Africa platform is engaging with the Latin America region (i.e. through Bloque Latin America) to outline effective strategies for cooperation on two issues: climate change concerns and support to migrants moving from Africa to South America (both regular and irregular).

The latter warrants a reasonable level of awareness - on the receiving side - of the contexts, languages, cultures and concerns in the countries of origin. This promises to be an interesting cross-regional model of inter-continental South-South Cooperation (SSC) which will be instrumental in cross-regional learning, exchange of experiences, and joint planning and programming on issues of common concern and interest.

Trade unions continue to defend the rights of migrants in a collaborative manner to ensure fair labour practices; supporting labour agreements with state actors; as well as addressing the protection of [workers in GCC countries](#). The ITUC- Africa has had several campaigns including the “[Stop the Bleeding Campaign](#)” which highlights the illicit financial flows out of the continent. The campaign educates African audiences on the syphoning of capital by multinationals through tax evasion and tax avoidance which funds could be utilised towards development and social protection financing. They work together with migrant groups and associations as well as with international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The role of the media is critical to shape the narrative on migration engaging with various migration governance actors. Collaboration with the diversity

of media from mainstream, social partners, as well as other actors are essential in terms of bridging knowledge and ensuring a rights-based approach in communicating around migrant stories and concerns. Examples from trade union and media are evident and shared in the box.

Opportunities for further engagement

It is prudent to be conscious that building relationships and fostering trust takes time. The benefits arising in terms of consistent and meaningful engagement contribute to all stakeholders’ impact on the GFMD process and the broader migration and development agenda.

Influencing the narratives on migration requires adequate presence of African actors in general and the leadership of African member states in the GFMD process. This ensures an equitable representation within the GFMD process. It also matches the energy and drive which has shaped the engagement of African non-state actors with the GFMD process.

In parallel, the relevant actors can be inspired by the exemplary model of South South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTrC) in the domain of migration and development.

As such, the following proposals are outlined to explore for enhanced use of the GFMD process to leverage African issues:

Directed to all actors:

1. Exploring the options for the GFMD to be better connected to the GCM as well as other Regional Consultative Processes (e.g. the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa(MIDSA), the Pan-African Forum on Migration (PAFOM), the Migration Dialogue for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Region(MID-IGAD), Rabat, Khartoum, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) for a collective pan-African agenda on migration governance.
2. Establishing an effective engagement model for

localisation of African state and non-state actors within the GFMD mechanisms and processes (e.g. non-state actors and mayors)

3. Explore options for joint and sustainable financing mechanisms (e.g. pooled and innovative funding) to address emerging issues and common interests regarding migration concerns for the African continent.
4. Advancing the existing model of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTrC) under frameworks such as the Organisation of African Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).
5. Explore innovative ways to include the media, particularly African-led, in supporting them as key actors that shape narratives around migration and collaboration with diaspora-based media.

Directed to African member states:

6. In light of the recommendation by non-state actors for a troika-chairmanship of the GFMD, with three chairs represented by 2 Global South and 1 global North member states, we propose that one seat is reserved for African member states.

7. There is a need for platforms and capacity for African member states to cement their progressive engagement through the GFMD roundtables, which will anchor the African priorities within the GFMD agenda moving beyond discussions to concrete engagement on issues that are of priority to African countries.

Directed to non-state actors:

8. African non-state actors can support member states in equipping themselves with thematic capacity on African related priorities as well as the usefulness of the GFMD process.
9. Exploring initiatives for cross-regional collaboration (e.g. Latin America, Asia and the Gulf) as well as joint actions and effective partnerships among the wider non-state actors (e.g. private sector, media, academia).



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Author's Biography

Paddy Siyanga Knudsen is a Zambian national with over 17 years of professional experience as a Development Economist. She holds a Master in Financial Economics from SOAS and BSc Development & Economics from London School of Economics. Her work covers development cooperation, regional integration and migration governance. Her experience includes supporting governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), bilateral development partners, EU institutions, Civil society as well as UN agencies in engagement strategies, research, programme formulation, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation. On migration governance, she has worked with IOM, UNESCO, UNHCR, EU, civil society, foundations and diaspora organisations in continental Europe, Jordan, China, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe as well as other assignments in West, East and Southern Africa. Her areas of interest in migration governance include labour migration, migration and development as well as diaspora engagement. She is a Vice President of the Global Research Forum on Diaspora & Transnationalism (GRFDT), member of GFMD civil society International steering committee, civil society rapporteur under the GFMD-GCM team, UN Network on Migration work streams on remittances/Diaspora as well as Indicators. She also coordinates the African nonstate actors platform on GFMD/GCM.

Dr. Iman Ahmed (she/her) is a Global Health and International Migration expert with over 20 years of practice in international development, large scale humanitarian emergency management and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN).

She holds a Medical Doctorate from the University of Khartoum Sudan, a Master of Art in Global Affairs and Public Policy from the American University in Cairo, specializing in Migration and Refugee Studies, and a Master of Public Health from University College Cork, in Ireland.

Throughout her career, Iman worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Health Organization (WHO), and as a researcher at the University of Toronto and The American University in Cairo. She is a founding member and the Secretary of External Affairs of the Sudan Doctors Union -Canada, representing the organization in the Coalition of Sudan Doctors Abroad (SDA) - an umbrella of 6 diaspora organizations supporting the health system in Sudan.

Iman is currently an international consultant and a Fellow of the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism focusing on migrant and refugee health and contributing to the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration indicator process and the Global Forum on Migration and Development Civil Society Mechanism with a special concentration on culture, narratives, and the return of artefacts to the African continents.

Her published work includes a combination of articles in medical journals and a chapter titled: "The Merowe Dam in Northern Sudan, A Case of Population Displacement and Impoverishment" in a book titled: "Refugees and Forced Migration in the Horn and Eastern Africa: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities" under the Springer series: "Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development".

Hakima Haithar is the Regional Deputy Director for the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Southern Africa. She has consulted with the University of Witwatersrand's Mobility Governance Lab at the African Center for Migration and Society a collaboration between Oxford University and the University of Witwatersrand. She further consulted with the Global Coalition On Migration (GCM), the African Union and the United Nations task team on the Global Compact on Migration. She was previously the Regional Migration & Displacement Manager for Save the Children International. She has been working in the development sector for the past twenty years. Her experience ranges from human rights, philanthropy, democracy, as well as migration & displacement work. She has worked with institutions such as the Ford Foundation, Amnesty International, Freedom House and Idasa. She holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Public and Development Management from Wits School of Governance as well as a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Migration studies from the University of Witwatersrand.

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