



Policy into practice: Implementing humanitarian priorities in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

**UK Roundtable Discussion Series
Summary Report**

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Executive summary

On 10 December 2018, after a year and a half of consultations and negotiations, 164 UN member states met in Marrakech to adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). The GCM is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement of its kind, covering all aspects of international migration through 23 wide-ranging objectives. While it is a non-binding cooperative framework, its ambition is to help guide a more effective and coordinated global approach.

The GCM makes some strides towards addressing humanitarian concerns faced by migrants across the world. However, its true test will be whether it can make a difference on the ground – in the lives of migrants and the communities that host them. As implementation of the GCM begins, it is important to ensure that humanitarian considerations remain at the forefront.

In 2019, the British Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) co-hosted a series of three roundtable discussions exploring the implementation of humanitarian priorities in the GCM. These discussions brought together UK-based representatives from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UN agencies, the UK government, NGOs, think tanks and academia, as well migrant and diaspora organisations (and crucially migrants themselves) to discuss how the GCM can be implemented in a way that makes a practical difference in areas of humanitarian concern.

This report brings together the ideas and recommendations directly raised in these discussions, alongside additional British Red Cross and ICRC analysis in terms of cross-cutting considerations and recommendations. Key recommendations are outlined below, including some of the first steps that organisations can take to ensure the GCM fulfils its potential.

Cross-cutting considerations for the GCM's implementation

- All organisations, including the UK government, should use the early phases of the GCM's implementation to build a solid foundation at national, regional and global levels. This should include:
 - continued investment in robust international architecture at the multilateral level
 - appropriate planning at national and local levels, including a cross-government strategy for the GCM
 - benchmarking the UK government's starting point for GCM implementation.
- The UK government should take a 'whole of government' approach for GCM implementation, increasing engagement with the GCM across government beyond those who are already aware of it while bringing references to the GCM into relevant government frameworks.
- UK-based organisations should work together to develop a 'whole of society approach' for the GCM, that supports and challenges the UK government's approach, ensuring accountability.
- All organisations should make sure that migrants' own experiences and voices have a meaningful influence on GCM implementation – and on migration policymaking more broadly.
- All those working to support the GCM's implementation should aim to build leadership for the GCM – for example, by designating 'champions' for the GCM among different organisations and groups.
- The UK government should work in partnership with other organisations to map, understand and build on links between different elements of the GCM, as well as between the GCM and other frameworks. In particular, stronger links are needed between the GCM and its counterpart, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), but they could also be made with frameworks such as the UN Conference of Parties (COP) or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Prioritising vulnerabilities

- The UK government should advance a working definition of ‘vulnerabilities’ in the context of migration which is consistent across government departments and informed by migrants’ experiences.
- Efforts should be made to support local organisations, local authorities, diaspora groups and migrants themselves – to address vulnerabilities, including through investment in their capacity to do this.
- The UK government should include measures to *reduce* vulnerabilities alongside those to address them as part of GCM implementation. This should include efforts to understand the humanitarian effects of migration-related government policies in the UK and internationally.
- Efforts are needed to bring together parallel conversations on migrants’ vulnerabilities and their contributions to sustainable development. This includes convening different organisations to understand how vulnerabilities may affect opportunities for sustainable development in particular issue areas, countries or regional approaches.

Detention as a last resort

- The UK government can use the GCM as a platform to share good practices from how it is reducing the use of detention in the UK and developing alternatives – sharing not just the end results but also the rationale and principles behind its approach.
- The UK government should consider action in areas where its practices fall short of the GCM’s commitments. Key areas to consider include the use of a time limit for detention and the fact that it is still detaining children.
- The UK government should assess how its actions affect transit countries, exploring whether any UK financial or foreign policy actions are increasing pressure on transit countries to detain migrants, and whether there are alternative approaches that could instead relieve such pressures.

Ensuring migrants’ access to essential services

- The UK government should consult with migrants themselves, as well as organisations working with them, to agree a working definition of ‘basic services’ for use in implementation of the GCM (including the type and level of services included).
- Based on this, the UK government and other UK-based organisations could begin comprehensively mapping and understanding the barriers migrants face accessing services in the UK, as well as specific contexts of interest internationally, along with possible solutions. Migrants themselves should play a key role in informing this work.
- Both at home and abroad, the UK government should prioritise efforts to provide reliable and accessible information to migrants – as a basic service in itself but also to facilitate access to wider services.

Saving lives

The discussions in this area focused specifically on mixed migration in the Sahel. However, these recommendations may have broader relevance.

- Humanitarian organisations, host and donor governments should ensure that policy and programming interventions in the Sahel are consistent with the GCM’s principles, prioritising a person-centred and rights-based approach.
- The UK government should consider how it could help advance a regional protection strategy in the Sahel, under the leadership of appropriate regional coordination mechanisms (for example, ECOWAS).
- The UK government, alongside humanitarian organisations, should also consider investment in strengthening responses at national levels. In particular, supporting national and local capacities to identify, and offer appropriate support to, migrants who are at risk.
- All organisations, including the UK government, should ensure that discussions on risks in the Sahel are linked to ongoing conversations around the development of legal pathways as an avenue for reducing the use of dangerous irregular migration routes.

1

Introduction



On 10 December 2018, following a year and a half of consultations and negotiations, 164 UN member states met in Marrakech to adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).¹ This was the culmination of a process set in motion by the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted at a special UN high-level summit aimed at uniting member states across the world behind a more humane and coordinated approach.²

The GCM is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement of its kind, covering all aspects of international migration through 23 wide-ranging objectives.³ At the heart of the GCM is the idea that migration is a global issue, requiring multilateral solutions. While it is a non-binding cooperative framework, its ambition is to help guide a more effective and coordinated global approach.

The final text is a historic document that makes some strides towards addressing humanitarian concerns, including key commitments around protecting and assisting vulnerable migrants and providing access to basic services. It also covers the issue of detention, and sets out a strong commitment to protect migrants' human rights, regardless of their status. However, the true test of the GCM will be whether it can make a difference on the ground, in the lives of migrants and the communities which host them.

As implementation of the GCM begins, humanitarian organisations including the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement need to ensure that humanitarian considerations remain at the forefront for everyone involved. As a long document containing 23 objectives, it is inevitable that not all parts of the GCM will be prioritised equally. It is critical that the GCM's commitment to a people-centred and rights-based approach to international migration is kept at the fore.

With this in mind, in 2019 the British Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) co-hosted a series of three roundtable discussions exploring the implementation of humanitarian priorities in the GCM. The discussions brought together UK-based representatives from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UN agencies, the UK government, NGOs, think tanks and academia, migrant and diaspora organisations (and crucially migrants themselves) to discuss how the GCM can be implemented in a way that makes a practical difference in areas of humanitarian concern.

Through these roundtable sessions, the Red Cross aimed to start a conversation around the implementation of the GCM in four national and international priority areas:

- prioritising vulnerabilities
- detention as a last resort
- ensuring access to essential services
- saving lives, addressing rights violations and preventing family separation.

This report brings together the ideas and recommendations directly raised in these discussions, alongside British Red Cross and ICRC analysis in terms of cross-cutting considerations and recommendations, in the hope that they can be used to inform discussions around the roles of the UK government and other UK organisations in implementing the GCM. This report is also intended to feed into wider global discussions on the GCM's implementation.

The series of roundtable discussions were held under the Chatham House rule, which means comments are not attributed in this summary report. The British Red Cross and ICRC thank all those who participated and gave their insights, particularly those who shared their own lived experience.

¹ The GCM was subsequently endorsed by 152 member states at the UN General Assembly on 19 December 2018. Five states voted against its adoption (the US, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland and Israel) and twelve abstained (Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Chile, Italy, Latvia, Libya, Lichtenstein, Romania, Singapore and Switzerland).

² For further information regarding the New York Declaration see refugeesmigrants.un.org/summit

³ For further information regarding the GCM see iom.int/global-compact-migration

The GCM's objectives and guiding principles

The GCM has 23 objectives:

- (1) Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies.
- (2) Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin.
- (3) Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration.
- (4) Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation.
- (5) Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.
- (6) Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work.
- (7) Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration.
- (8) Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants.
- (9) Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants.
- (10) Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.
- (11) Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner.
- (12) Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral.
- (13) Use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives.
- (14) Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle.
- (15) Provide access to basic services for migrants.
- (16) Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion.
- (17) Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration.
- (18) Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences.
- (19) Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries.
- (20) Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants.
- (21) Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration.
- (22) Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits.
- (23) Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration.

It also contains a number of general principles aimed at ensuring that responses to migration prioritise:

- principles to be people-centred, gender-responsive and child-sensitive
- international cooperation
- national sovereignty
- rule of law and due process
- sustainable development
- human rights



Photo © Marco Panzetti/British Red Cross

2

Cross-cutting considerations for the GCM's implementation

Summary:

- A strong foundation for implementing the GCM is critical. This includes developing effective and accountable systems at global, regional and national levels, as well investing in efforts to benchmark existing UK policy and practice against the GCM's commitments.
- The GCM can be used to bring about a 'whole of government' approach to UK migration policymaking, but more people need to be aware of it. The GCM is not widely known beyond international-facing government departments.
- More can be done in the UK to support the GCM through a 'whole of society' approach. Civil society can play a particularly important role in advocating for the GCM's value, convening discussions, assessing national progress and sharing best practice.
- Implementation should be informed by the experiences of migrants themselves and support their ability to help achieve the GCM's aspirations.
- Political leadership is needed at all levels to build a wider base of support and momentum for the GCM.
- There are significant links between the GCM's different objectives, and between the GCM and other global frameworks – especially the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). More can be done to make the most of these links.

2.1 Building a strong foundation for effective implementation

Implementation of the GCM is still in the early stages of what will be a long-term process. It should be understood as a 'marathon not a sprint', and can be viewed as a series of phases. This first phase is an opportunity to build a solid foundation for effective implementation – at global, regional and national levels.

In the year following the GCM's adoption, efforts have focused on getting appropriate architecture in place at a global level, and a number of institutional reforms have taken place to improve the UN system's collective response. The GCM is seen as a catalyst for multilateral cooperation and reform in migration governance, and it is hoped that this first phase will bring UN agencies together to address issues affecting their work – for example, overlapping mandates and competition for resources.

Key developments at this level throughout 2019 included the establishment of:

- **The UN Network on Migration**, seen as the principal UN means for ensuring effective, coherent support for GCM implementation. The network is comprised of 38 UN entities and is accountable to

the UN Secretary-General. It is rare to have such a wide network in place, and this presents many opportunities.

- **The UN Capacity-Building Mechanism**, called for in the GCM and designed to support the GCM's implementation at national and regional levels, through a multi-partner trust fund (launched in July 2019), as well as an upcoming connection hub and global knowledge platform (to be launched in 2020).

New global and regional mechanisms will also evaluate the pace of implementation. These measures include the secretary-general's first report (which is called for by the GCM itself), as well as regional review processes (scheduled for 2020) and the International Migration Review Forum in 2022. However, the discussions suggested some concerns that the GCM lacks a clear system of accountability, suggesting that each of these mechanisms should be given more explicit roles in terms of accountability for the GCM's implementation.

Beyond new global architecture, migration coordination mechanisms are also being established within national level UN country teams (where they exist). These provide a forum to discuss GCM-related issues and bring together key stakeholders to implement priorities.

In some cases, national implementation efforts are seen to be progressing much more quickly than the formal global level processes. Indeed, there is a risk that slow global processes may create a loss of momentum among national governments and civil society organisations who are keen to move forwards with GCM commitments. Examples of new initiatives include the improved regional coordination developing around the GCM in Central America and Asia, as well as national implementation plans that are being developed in Bangladesh, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Portugal and the Philippines.⁴ Sections 2.2 and 2.3 below outline what national arrangements might look like in the UK.

This first phase of GCM implementation should include national efforts to benchmark the starting point for GCM implementation, mapping existing policy and practice against the GCM's objectives and wider commitments. This kind of stocktaking can be conducted within national governments, as well as independently by civil society organisations.

Beyond its list of more specific objectives and commitments there is a broader 'spirit of the GCM'. The early phases of GCM implementation can also be used to develop a shared understanding of the GCM's key principles among those working at national levels, especially within government. For example, the GCM has a strong focus on 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approaches, human rights and national sovereignty. Embedding principles such as these in national and international partnerships is an important part of building a strong foundation for effective implementation.

Finally, part of building a solid foundation for GCM implementation at the national level is making appropriate arrangements at an even more local level. For example, while various representatives of high-profile global cities have engaged significantly with the GCM process, many members of local authorities are still unaware of the GCM and may not be ready, willing or sufficiently resourced to engage.

2.2 Strengthening a 'whole of government' approach in the UK

The GCM proposes a 'whole of government approach' to migration, outlining that "migration is a multidimensional reality that cannot be addressed by one government policy sector alone" and that "to develop and implement effective migration policies and practices, a 'whole of government' approach is needed to ensure horizontal and vertical policy coherence across all sectors and levels of government".⁵

While UK government departments do already collaborate in various ways around migration, the GCM can be a catalyst for strengthening a 'whole of government' approach, both towards the implementation of the GCM itself and towards migration policy and practice in general.

In the UK, GCM progress so far has centred around internationally focused departments working on multilateral reforms, and engagement among domestic-facing departments has been much more limited. For example, the December 2018 UK Immigration White Paper did not mention the GCM, showing that the GCM has not yet permeated mainstream domestic migration policy.⁶ Our roundtable discussions also suggested that officials working in relevant domestic policy areas – including those at the Home Office – are not widely aware of the GCM.

Strengthening a UK 'whole of government' approach for GCM implementation would involve building better connections between different government departments. Devolved administrations, local government and other local authorities (for example, mayors) should also be included in a 'whole of government' approach and could help central government benchmark current practices against relevant GCM commitments. Such wider engagement can be facilitated through spreading awareness of the GCM. Simple first steps could include bringing the GCM into existing teams in

⁴ These particular country-level developments were mentioned during the roundtable discussion series, however this list is not necessarily exhaustive.

⁵ See GCM Paragraph 15.

⁶ See assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766465/The-UKs-future-skills-based-immigration-system-print-ready.pdf

domestic government departments looking at relevant policy areas (for example those exploring alternatives to detention or migrants' access to healthcare) to discuss how the GCM could bolster existing strategies.

2.3 Building a UK 'whole of society' approach in support of the GCM

The GCM also promotes an even broader 'whole of society' approach to migration governance. It advocates addressing migration in all its dimensions by forming partnerships that include migrants, diasporas, local communities, civil society, academia, the private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions, national human rights institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders.⁷

A key strength of the GCM is its potential to provide a platform for informal alliances, coalitions and partnerships, outside – but complementary to – the formal implementation process. There is an opportunity to use the shared vision, understanding and framework presented by the GCM as a platform to advance new conversations and build coalitions, expanding on existing discussions in specific policy areas.

Civil society can play a key role in this whole of society approach, both supporting and challenging national approaches to implementation of the GCM. Areas of particular value for UK civil society engagement include:

- **promoting and advocating for the GCM as a valuable framework** and highlighting the need for progress around implementation
- **convening discussions**, both in thematic areas where there is already momentum (discussing next steps) and areas that are more challenging (building consensus)
- **mapping and benchmarking national progress** to provide an independent view of implementation
- designating **civil society champions** for specific objectives
- promoting and sharing **best practice** from experience linked to GCM commitments.

One challenge that comes with this approach is building trust between partners with different backgrounds and perspectives, including migrants, authorities and civil society organisations. In the UK this trust may be difficult to achieve due to a policy environment that the roundtable discussions suggested can often feel adversarial for government and civil society alike. However, certain key moments (such as the Syrian Resettlement Programme) have played a key role in building greater trust between the Home Office and civil society, enabling new ways of working and demonstrating that such a shift towards more collaborative relations could be possible.

Another problem is that – as with government departments and local authorities – the GCM is not widely known in UK civil society, beyond a limited group of organisations which have engaged more heavily with the work so far. There is an opportunity to build awareness and buy-in of the GCM among civil society, encouraging organisations to explore their role in achieving commitments and empowering more people to use it as a tool in their work.

2.4 Ensuring discussions are built around migrants' lived experience after contributions'

Migrants themselves have much to contribute to discussions on GCM implementation and migration policymaking more broadly. GCM implementation will only truly fulfil its objectives if migrants have meaningful input into decision-making, and the process presents an important opportunity to ensure their experiences and voices are embedded in future approaches. This lived experience should inform strategic discussions at all levels. Migrants can share crucial perspectives of where key concerns and blockages lie in different policy areas – as well as propose solutions.

By including migrants in the process, GCM implementation can acknowledge, build on and fully harness migrants' own contributions to help achieve the GCM's ambitions. This is not always fully emphasised in the text of the GCM itself, for example in relation to vulnerabilities or the role migrants themselves play in providing basic services.

⁷ See GCM Paragraph 15

2.5 Building support and leadership for the GCM

There are concerns that the first phases of GCM implementation have been too focused on process, leaving a gap in political leadership. There is an opportunity in the next phases to identify ‘champions’ for the GCM. Whether or not more formally designated, such champions could help build political support and generate momentum behind the GCM as a compelling ‘brand’ – at national and international levels, in both government and civil society.

In one respect, lessons can be taken from the success of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in terms of building an impactful brand which has sustained significant political momentum. Political space could also be built for the GCM – and conversations around implementing its commitments – by bringing it into the discussions taking place as part of other more well-established platforms, for example the COP26 climate change summit that will take place in Glasgow in 2020.

However, the GCM has a complex political background, perhaps more so than other comparable frameworks. The GCM was adopted by a majority and by a broad range of UN member states, which suggests widespread global commitment, at least in terms of engaging with the GCM process. However, many (particularly European) member states did not endorse the document, and there was vigorous opposition in some countries.⁸ This poses questions in terms of the multilateral fora through which implementation could take place.

For example, while in usual circumstances entities such as the EU or G7 might play a key role, there

may be limitations because of prominent states that have not adopted the GCM. In fact, this limited adoption among some European states has meant that in international forums the New York Declaration is often invoked as opposed to the GCM – since it represents a broader consensus document.

Meanwhile, many aspects of the GCM that were contentious during negotiations continue to present challenges as states approach implementation. Examples of these issues include securing commitments on legal pathways, detention or access to basic services for migrants. While the GCM can play a useful role as a catalyst, ultimately it also contains a principle of national sovereignty over migration policy, and this will shape possibilities for implementing commitments.

2.6 Building on links to avoid siloed approaches

There are significant links between the GCM’s different objectives (as outlined in subsequent chapters), and it is important that efforts to implement the GCM avoid falling into siloed approaches. Instead, they should fully capitalise on these links by bringing together groups who are focused on different objectives of the GCM, so that they can work collaboratively.

There are also critical links between the GCM and its counterpart, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), particularly in areas of humanitarian concern.⁹ For example, commitments in the GCM to enhance the availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration sit alongside GCR commitments on increased refugee resettlement pathways.¹⁰ Likewise, commitments in the GCM to improve migrants’ access to basic services are matched by GCR commitments including on education, health and food security.¹¹

⁸ See ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/welcome-and-global-compact-continental-pullout-21653

⁹ The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) was the result of a parallel process also mandated by the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Like the GCM, the GCR is a non-binding voluntary framework, which aims to ‘provide a basis for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing among all UN member states, together with other relevant stakeholders’. The GCR is made up of two components: The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) – a country-level framework and plan of action primarily for refugee self-reliance and local integration – and a broader Programme of Action, which outlines principles for responsibility-sharing and areas in need of support. The GCR’s objectives are to ease the pressure on host countries; enhance refugee self-reliance; expand access to third-country solutions; and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. For more information see refugeesmigrants.un.org/refugees-compact

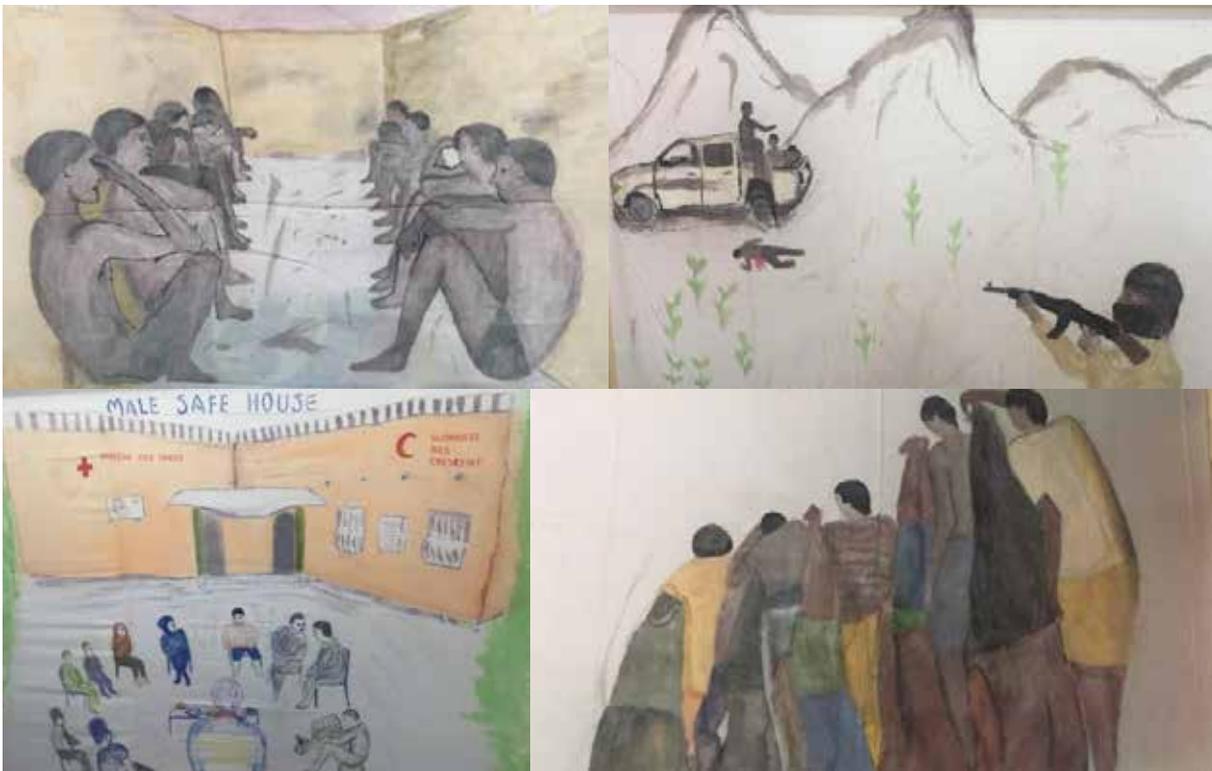
¹⁰ Regular migration pathways are covered in Objective 5 of the GCM, while commitments on refugee resettlement are contained in paragraphs 90-93 of the GCR.

¹¹ Migrants’ access to basic services is covered in Objective 15 of the GCM. Relevant commitments in the GCR include those on education (paragraphs 68-9), health (paragraphs 72-3) and food security (paragraphs 80-81).

While both the GCM and the GCR originated from the same New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the two global compacts have been developed and implemented separately, and this may inhibit joined-up solutions to common issues. There is a risk that pre-existing siloes will become increasingly entrenched, leading to parallel conversations and duplication. However, efforts to implement the GCM could learn a lot from ongoing conversations around the GCR. For example, there are lessons from the GCR around successful ‘whole of government’ approaches and engaging local authorities. Similarly, as outlined above, more can be made of links between the GCM and other international frameworks or platforms, for example with the COP or the SDGs.

3

Prioritising vulnerabilities



Summary:

- There is no simple link between migration and vulnerability. Vulnerability can be linked to a number of factors experienced at different points in migration journeys or may be the cause of migration itself.
- While containing various relevant commitments, the GCM does not define ‘vulnerability’. Any understanding of ‘vulnerability’ used to implement the GCM should capture the complexities of the term, while being concrete enough for policymakers to use.
- Promising GCM commitments include those on cross-border frameworks for child protection, appropriate assistance at different stages of migration and recognising the need for a multi-level approach to address vulnerabilities.
- Reducing vulnerabilities is as important as addressing them. This includes addressing the humanitarian effects of migration policies, as well as implementing related commitments like pathways for regular migration or alternatives to detention.
- Effectively addressing vulnerabilities depends on working out how to reach the most vulnerable, bridging gaps between humanitarian organisations working with different vulnerable groups, and recognising the role that diaspora networks and migrants themselves play in addressing vulnerabilities.
- Efforts to address migrants’ vulnerabilities, including through the GCM, should be better linked with parallel conversations on their contributions to sustainable development. This includes exploring such dynamics in specific national or regional contexts, considering the crossover between humanitarian and development work, and providing space for migrants’ own voices.

3.1 Vulnerabilities in the GCM

There are several objectives in the GCM relevant to addressing and reducing vulnerabilities. GCM Objective 7 (‘address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration’), outlines several important principles, with key elements including prioritising human rights, recognising vulnerabilities experienced at different stages of migration, and the importance of partnerships in addressing and reducing vulnerabilities.

Other GCM objectives relevant to vulnerabilities include:

- **Objective 1:** Collect and utilise accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies – although it was noted that data protection is crucial to ensure that data collection does not exacerbate vulnerabilities.
- **Objective 2:** Minimise the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin.
- **Objective 8:** Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants.

3.2 Defining and understanding ‘vulnerability’

The GCM does not explicitly define what it means by ‘vulnerability’ and the term ‘vulnerability’ is often used at an international level without a clear understanding of its meaning. This is not necessarily a problem since – given the realities of negotiations – any definition agreed may have been too narrow. While a more formal process of defining ‘vulnerability’ for the GCM is unnecessary, those working on GCM implementation need to find a shared understanding.

Any understanding of vulnerability used in GCM implementation should be informed by migrants’ own lived experience and should encompass the following considerations:

- While vulnerabilities may in some cases be linked to inherent characteristics (like age or disability), in many cases vulnerability is linked to the circumstances people find themselves in.
- Vulnerability is not a constant, but is dynamic and shifts over time. Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) can all be vulnerable at different times – in their country of origin, in transit and at their destination.
- Vulnerabilities can differ hugely in different contexts.
- Any understanding of vulnerabilities in the GCM should be paired with focus on resilience.

While agencies and policymakers often think more rigidly in terms of specific ‘vulnerable’ groups or categories of people, rigid distinctions can mean missing other forms of vulnerability. Assigned categories may not mean much from the perspective of people to whom they are applied. Individuals can fall into different categories at different times, fall into multiple categories at the same time, or may even be vulnerable despite not falling into any specific ‘vulnerable’ group.

To some extent the GCM captures this more situational concept of vulnerability, referring to ‘migrants in a situation of vulnerability’. However, at other points it falls back into listing specific vulnerable groups. While reference to such groups is helpful in giving examples of vulnerabilities, it can also limit the scope of what or who is considered ‘vulnerable’.

However, there may be trade-offs between using either a more nuanced definition of vulnerability which captures all the complexities linked to the concept, or a simpler definition which is easier for policymakers to put into practice. It is often easier to attach support to identifiable characteristics. One possible solution is that policies could be grounded in more tangible manifestations of vulnerability, such as insecurity, fear or inability to meet basic needs. This could help policymakers move away from rigid definitions of vulnerabilities based on categories of people, while ensuring that a more situational understanding of vulnerabilities is still practical enough for them to use.

“Vulnerability is feeling like I have no voice of my own. Feeling like I am not being treated like a human being. I should be protected and respected regardless of personal characteristics because I am just a human.”

Migrant representative

“Even a smallest change in the legislation, or in the practice in Home Office, can have huge impacts on the individuals. These impacts should be taken into account while designing or amending the policies for those migrants who are vulnerable or who can easily become vulnerable.”

Migrant representative

3.3 Migration and vulnerabilities

There is no single, simple link between migration and vulnerabilities. Vulnerability stretches across the migration experience, from countries of origin, destination and arrival, and across all countries and regions, including the UK.

Some of the factors linked to vulnerabilities as part of migration journeys include:

- changes in legal status
- reporting requirements
- difficulties navigating new systems or knowing where to go to for advice
- challenges finding and paying for appropriate legal representation where needed
- destitution and financial insecurity
- labels attached to people leading to stigma (for example 'asylum seeker', 'IDP', 'returnee')
- physical and mental trauma experienced during migration journeys
- conflict and violence in transit countries along migration routes
- difficulty accessing appropriate and timely healthcare
- experiences of detention
- inability to access labour markets, either at all or at the person's level of qualification
- feelings of loss of agency or disempowerment.

In addition, migration itself may be caused by vulnerabilities people face in their countries of origin, such as lack of access to basic services.

While there is a significant focus on quantitative data for documenting migration trends, qualitative data can be critical to understanding different layers and forms of vulnerability in different contexts. To understand vulnerabilities, we need detailed case studies, not just numbers.

“There are obviously vulnerabilities due to more constant features, like having a disability, or because of ethnic background, gender and religion. But my understanding of vulnerability is that it is something that can happen to anyone anytime.”

Migrant representative

“There are stories out there about people drowning in the sea. A family, for example, when their boat was sinking, had to choose one of their children to carry to the beach because they cannot carry both at the same time because they would all be drowned. Can you imagine choosing one of your children over others to save their life? Other stories of spending days on a boat, without food, toilet and enough space.”

Migrant representative

“I remember reading some criticisms about the fact that universities are working as ‘border guards’ and monitoring migrant students’ whereabouts, but it was after the cancellation of my scholarship [linked to immigration status] I felt how this monitoring can be strict [...] This is when I understood how a university, in which I am learning and doing intellectual activities to exchange knowledge and expertise, can become a place where I can be monitored to a degree that I would feel vulnerable.”

Migrant representative

3.4 How can the GCM help address and reduce vulnerabilities?

The GCM provides some new frameworks for addressing vulnerabilities. For example, in terms of responding to vulnerabilities among children, the GCM mentions giving migrant children the same access as citizens to national child protection systems, and also recognises cross-border frameworks for child protection. The GCM provides specific measures to address vulnerabilities among unaccompanied children, and lists measures to help border authorities avoid family separation and work with child protection authorities.

Similarly, in recognising vulnerabilities experienced at different stages of migration, the GCM raises a key question: what kind of assistance is needed and at what point?

The GCM is particularly ambitious when it comes to the role of local authorities and other local organisations in addressing vulnerabilities, recognising the need for a multi-level approach. In particular, Objective 7 commits to the “involvement of authorities and relevant stakeholders in the identification, referral and assistance of migrants in a situation of vulnerability, including through

agreements with national protection bodies, legal aid and service providers, as well as the engagement of mobile response teams, where they exist.”¹² Relevant local organisations include Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies.

As well as addressing vulnerabilities, Objective 7 of the GCM commits to reducing them. Implementing this objective could provide a platform to explore the humanitarian impact of migration policies, encouraging governments and organisations at all levels to ask which policies are likely to increase vulnerabilities or risks.

Other measures in the GCM which could help reduce vulnerabilities include commitments on enhancing regular migration pathways.¹³ In many cases, migrants end up in vulnerable situations out of desperation, embarking on risky journeys due to a lack of safe and regular migration routes. Similarly, as discussed in section 4, commitments around alternatives to detention present another opportunity to reduce vulnerabilities linked to experiences in detention.

3.5 Challenges for implementing GCM commitments on vulnerabilities

Some of the challenges involved are practical, for example the question of how best to reach those who are most vulnerable.

The structure of the formal humanitarian system may also limit humanitarian agencies’ collective ability to address migrants’ vulnerabilities appropriately. While the considerations outlined above suggest the need for a flexible, holistic approach to vulnerabilities, in reality different sectors have developed around specific groups considered vulnerable, and agencies whose mandates are often attached to particular groups. As already outlined, such divisions have become further entrenched by the division between the two global compacts – one on migration and the other on refugees.

A divided and sometimes siloed sector may be confusing for first responders looking for training and guidance in responding to vulnerabilities, who may be unsure where to look. In addition, as

¹² See Objective 7 paragraph 23(k)

¹³ Commitments to enhance legal pathways for migration are found in Objective 5 of the GCM.



Photo © Phil Greenwood / BRC

different organisations compete for funding, they may inadvertently create a hierarchy of vulnerabilities through claims that particular groups they support are ‘the most vulnerable’.

One factor that the GCM does not emphasise enough is the role migrants themselves play in addressing vulnerabilities, both through their own individual resilience, and in supporting others. They may help other migrants (or returnees) in the country where they reside, or support those in other countries through diaspora networks. In this way vulnerability itself can be turned into an asset, and people’s own experiences can put them in a unique position to help others. It is crucial for all organisations working with vulnerable people to consider how these kinds of contributions could be better supported and facilitated.

3.6 Vulnerabilities and sustainable development: Joining the dots

Efforts to address vulnerabilities as part of the GCM’s implementation should be linked to parallel

discussions concerning sustainable development. It is not the case that some migrants are vulnerable while others are agents of development; in reality, many people are both.

Sustainable development is now understood as part of the migration agenda, recognising the key role mobility can play in achieving development goals. This idea is present throughout the GCM, including in Objective 19, which commits to creating conditions for migrants and diaspora to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries. This includes financial support (for example, through remittances), but also spans non-financial development contributions. These might include migrants who work or volunteer to provide services in host countries, the contributions diaspora groups make to their countries of origin in knowledge, skills transfer and exchange, or even the support they can provide in the context of humanitarian emergencies (for example, during the outbreak of Ebola in Sierra Leone).

Taking action to address vulnerabilities is important in its own right – some people who are vulnerable may be unable to contribute and are no less deserving of support – but there is also a need to better understand the links between vulnerabilities and sustainable development. This has long been a ‘blind spot’ for both development and humanitarian (as well as human rights) communities.

Addressing and reducing vulnerabilities experienced by migrants should be seen as a pre-condition to facilitate their contributions to sustainable development. Migrants are best placed to contribute to communities when they are safe and their basic needs are met, and vulnerabilities can stop them achieving their full potential. For example, the conversation on facilitating remittances has focused mainly on issues such as remittance costs, but has not acknowledged how conditions faced by migrants in host countries are likely to impact their ability to remit. While this may be recognised at a higher level, factors like these are too often overlooked when it comes to taking action.

In part, this may be linked to ongoing questions around the humanitarian-development nexus. In practice, addressing connections between vulnerability and sustainable development requires coordination between humanitarian and development organisations, which can be challenging. There are often differences in approaches, organisational values and funding streams. It is important that development and humanitarian organisations can find ways to work together, while recognising the need for distinct approaches and goals. In particular, it is important to maintain a distinct space for principled humanitarian action, including providing assistance to migrants in line with the principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality.

The solutions for linking up work on vulnerabilities and development are unlikely to be found in the GCM text. These two aspects of migration sit in different places in the GCM and under different objectives. These connections can, however, be harnessed through the process of implementing the GCM, including by:

- Bringing together parallel conversations – both within formal processes and more informally – to ensure that ‘migration for development’ commitments are implemented in a way that adapts to vulnerabilities, and vice versa.
- Reframing conversations on subjects such as work, health or gender to view vulnerabilities and opportunities as two sides of the same coin.
- Exploring the balance between vulnerabilities and development opportunities in specific country or regional contexts, examining how they are addressed and the effects of different factors from private sector investment to humanitarian assistance and development work.
- Making the most of the private sector’s role by emphasising how restrictive policies that worsen vulnerabilities also stifle opportunity.
- Ensuring that migrants themselves play a key role in discussions, sharing experiences of both vulnerabilities and contribution, and the links between the two.
- Building on wider efforts to understand the developmental impact of not addressing vulnerabilities, including those of the World Bank and others to put fragility at the centre of inclusive growth.

4

Detention as a last resort



Photo © Getty Images

Summary:

- The GCM contains significant commitments on using detention as a last resort, working to develop alternatives to detention and ending the practice of detaining children.
- Despite commitments in the GCM – and differing practices at country and regional levels – the use of detention as a tool for migration management is increasing globally. This creates significant trauma, destroys trust in immigration systems and comes at a high financial cost.
- While the UK still detains higher numbers of migrants than many other European countries, it has significantly reduced the use of detention and has piloted community-based alternatives. The UK is strong in terms of monitoring mechanisms, transparency, independent review and consultation on reform.
- However, further reforms are needed to bring the UK in line with the GCM requirement that detention should be a last resort, and with commitments on child detention and time limits for detention. The UK has also recognised the need for further reform to improve communication and access to information for detained people and to respond more effectively to vulnerabilities.
- Key opportunities for GCM implementation include: using the GCM to make challenges relating to the use of immigration detention more politically visible; making the most of multilateral reforms to drive progress; capitalising on the GCM as a platform to share good practice; and using the GCM's underlying principles to reduce detention.

4.1 Immigration detention in the GCM

Under Objective 13 of the GCM, adopting states commit to 'use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives'. GCM negotiations on detention were challenging, but consensus was eventually reached, and civil society broadly welcomed the final text. While this does not go beyond established frameworks and good practice, the GCM marks the first time some of these standards have been featured in this kind of global agreement.

The GCM goes beyond the issues of safeguards and monitoring in detention, to address how the use of detention itself can be limited. Most notably, it connects the usual language of 'detention as a last resort' to concrete measures which could be used to fulfil that obligation – including by developing alternatives to detention. As a step towards this goal, the GCM includes a commitment for governments to share good practice on such alternatives.¹⁴

“My detention in [European country] was very difficult because it was just after I got separated from my mum. I was with my father, but I did not know where my mum was, and it was so stressful not to know about her. I have never seen a prison or detention centre before that but it was like the movies. I did not know what would happen to me there at all.”

Migrant representative

¹⁴ See GCM paragraph 29b.

The GCM's commitment to 'working to end the practice of child detention in the context of international migration' is also positive, as well as its commitment to protect and respect the best interests of the child at all times.¹⁵ This was a particularly challenging area of discussion in the New York Declaration and throughout the GCM negotiations.

Beyond Objective 13, however, it is important to make connections with wider GCM provisions relating to vulnerabilities and state approaches to migration management. Ultimately, action to limit the use of detention depends not only on national legislation that designates detention as a last resort, but also on wider domestic decisions regarding migration governance – including the decision to invest in community-based management.

4.2 Global trends

Contrary to commitments in the GCM, detention is increasingly being used for migration management, especially by states who are keen to exert visible control over their borders for domestic audiences.

Practices vary by country, and some of the most concerning trajectories are in states which consider themselves leaders in human rights. Negative trends in high income countries could risk discouraging better practices elsewhere – for example, the recent reforms in Thailand on the detention of children, and choices by states in Latin America and Africa not to detain.

Transit countries present particular challenges. In Libya, for example, people in detention have become part of exploitative economies or caught up in hostilities. Transit countries often use detention to try and manage or deter the movement of people into their territory or onwards to other states. This is often worsened by pressures from countries of destination to limit onward movement, leading to an increase in the use of detention in transit. For example, pressures from EU states on Libya and Sub-Saharan Africa, and sometimes also on other EU states like Greece and Italy. In such cases,

transit countries may feel 'obliged to detain' for fear of accusations that they are failing to prevent onward movement.

There are various problems with the increasing use of detention for migration management – both in destination and transit countries. First and foremost, as recognised in the GCM, detention is often incredibly traumatic.¹⁶ Testimony from people who have been detained highlights the severity of these consequences and the long-term impact of detention.

“The isolation was the most difficult thing in the detention. I found two nationals [from the same country] and it was so good to talk to someone who can speak the same language. In that week, we had only one hour to see the sunlight. But I could not even enjoy the sunlight because I had no freedom.”

Migrant representative

While conditions and practices vary significantly between different countries, factors which increase the effects of detention on people's mental and physical health include:

- prior trauma in countries of origin or during migration journeys
- repeated detention, including instances where people have crossed several borders and are detained in multiple countries, or where they are detained repeatedly in the same country
- family separation and lack of contact with family members
- isolation from others
- poor living conditions and/or treatment by staff in facilities

¹⁴ See GCM paragraph 29b.

¹⁵ Both commitments are contained in paragraph 29h of the GCM.

¹⁶ See GCM paragraph 29f.

- lack of communication about a person's case, the reason for detention or how long they will be there, or information not being provided in appropriate languages
- use of indefinite detention
- lack of legal advice to understand their rights and navigate complex processes
- feelings of disempowerment and not being listened to or believed.

Even when people have been released, the psychological effects may continue long afterwards, particularly if they are required to report to authorities and may be detained again.

Beyond the psychological effect on migrants, detention may also have negative consequences for states themselves. It can be extremely expensive, and also causes migrants to lose trust in state migration management systems.

The increasing use of detention for migration management is also at odds with relevant good practice. The GCM indicates that the decision to detain should be based on an individual assessment of necessity and proportionality, and that liberty should be considered the default. Detention should only be used as a last resort where the person's circumstances justify its use and alternatives have been considered.

The GCM's inclusion of alternatives to detention represents a more positive trend, and reflects ongoing work at various levels to develop their use. This is rooted in the idea that, if detention is to be considered a last resort, then viable alternatives are needed.

Alternatives to detention should not be considered alternatives to freedom, and the specifics are important. Alternatives to detention may be just as psychologically harmful as detention itself and require procedural safeguards. There is a clear consensus that various conditions should be in place, including that alternatives are non-custodial and community-based.¹⁷ However, while the GCM reflects a growing international conversation around alternatives, more is needed to put this into action more widely.

¹⁷ This is reflected in paragraph 29a of the GCM.

“I remember when I received a BAIL letter from Home Office in my asylum application. I still had a student visa, which was a valid visa for two more years, but just because I applied for asylum, I was liable for being detained. Can you imagine the feeling it can create in migrants? Most people directly think that they will be detained. Migrants who spent months and years fleeing conflict and persecution, who are running from prisons because they are ill-treated and tortured, they come here to see that they might be detained. This fear is a constant fear.”

Migrant representative

4.3 Focus on the UK

In contrast to the overall global picture, the UK's policy and practice on immigration detention has been improving. However, historically the use of detention for immigration purposes has been comparatively widespread.

The UK has taken positive steps which reflect the GCM's aim to 'use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives'. While more people are still detained in the UK than in many other European countries, the recent trend is a significant decline in the number of people being detained and a reduction in the overall capacity of detention centres. This is in contrast to other European countries, where use of detention is increasing.

Also, in line with the overall ambition of GCM Objective 13, the UK government has been piloting community-based alternatives. One pilot in Newcastle worked with the Action Foundation to provide community-based support for women in the asylum system who would otherwise have been detained. There are a number of other small pilots

in development, looking at various groups of people with different immigration status. Unlike previous pilots in the UK, these projects are focused more heavily on engagement and case resolution, rather than primarily on removal. While recognising that the UK's overall policy approach needs more work, civil society has welcomed the Home Office's openness and consultation in developing their strategy on alternatives to detention.

Other good practices from the UK include strong monitoring mechanisms and transparency for UK detention facilities, plus an increased willingness in recent years to seek independent advice and improve practice, including through commissioning reports and seeking recommendations. An example of this is the Shaw Review, which prompted the UK to reconsider the size and purpose of its detention estate.¹⁸

The UK government has tried to improve access to information, advice and support, both in detention and more widely in the UK immigration system.¹⁹ However, further reform is still needed on this front. More could be done to identify and address vulnerabilities earlier in detention, and progress in this area is ongoing.

Despite all this, tensions remain between GCM commitments on detention and UK practice. One GCM commitment is that detention should be for the 'shortest possible period of time', yet the UK does not currently have a time limit on immigration detention, despite mounting pressure from civil society.²⁰ In addition, while the GCM seeks commitments to work towards ending the practice of child detention, the UK still has a way to go – although substantially fewer children have been detained since reforms in 2011.²¹

“They should not think to put immigrants in the detention as an option. Because it is humiliating, torturing, you become suicidal, it is giving you plans to end your life. There is no promise you are coming out, no promise they are deporting you, or how long are you going to be there. Human beings should be treated fairly, they should know why they are detained and when they will be released.”

Migrant representative

4.4 Opportunities for GCM implementation

Recognising the difficult experiences of migrants who have been detained, the GCM could help drive real change to reduce the use of detention.

Four areas of opportunity can be identified:

- using the GCM to make challenges relating to the use of immigration detention more politically visible
- making the most of multilateral reforms to drive progress
- capitalising on the GCM as a platform to share good practice
- using the GCM's underlying principles to reduce detention.

Using the GCM to make challenges relating to the use of immigration detention more politically visible

Although the GCM text is not binding, it demonstrates international commitment to reducing the use of detention and working towards

¹⁸ See assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/490782/52532_Shaw_Review_Accessible.pdf

¹⁹ This is in line with paragraph 29d-f of the GCM.

²⁰ See GCM paragraph 29f.

²¹ See GCM paragraph 29h.

alternatives. The GCM brings new political visibility to existing frameworks and good practices, and presents an opportunity to increase political will for human rights-based reforms to migration management.

The GCM can also be used to bring new political visibility to ongoing discussions at the national level. However, any such work should take into account each country's particular circumstances – including the domestic policy background – to best identify how the GCM can be used. For example, discussions on taking forward GCM commitments in the UK should build on the existing reforms detailed above, as well as existing recommendations.

Making the most of multilateral reforms to drive progress

The various multilateral reforms and processes which are taking place following the adoption of the GCM could help drive progress (see section 2.1). In particular, alternatives to detention are likely to feature in the work of the newly established UN Migration Network. This could provide a forum to make progress on some of the key issues in this area, for example assessing how best to support states who wish to work towards alternatives, exploring challenges and possible solutions, and developing a common understanding of 'alternatives to detention'.

Furthermore, use of detention could be reduced through new UN country-level migration coordination mechanisms, multilateral forums (such as the International Migration Review Forum in 2022), using new funding mechanisms to finance pilot initiatives on alternatives to detention, and exchanging examples of good practice through newly established platforms. The Global Compact on Refugees also provides opportunities to reduce detention, and those working towards fulfilling GCM commitments may find parallel conversations taking place around the GCR commitment that 'in support of host countries, states and relevant stakeholders will contribute resources and expertise for [...] the development of non-custodial and community-based alternatives to detention.'²²

Capitalising on the GCM as a platform to share good practice

The GCM provides a platform to share good practice on alternatives to detention, both informally and through the formal multilateral channels mentioned above.

Before the GCM, there were various efforts to consolidate and share good practice in this area. For example, when the UK was developing its recent pilot programme, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) facilitated links with Canada, Sweden and Cyprus. The GCM can be an opportunity to encourage further international exchanges, and different states can compare experiences as they work towards GCM commitments.

These comparisons should be grounded in the principle that, while there are common underlying elements and safeguards which should feature in any context, there is no single model of alternatives to detention which can be applied in every country – or to every individual. Given the very different migration trends and political realities in different countries, good practice needs to be contextualised and adapted to national dynamics.

Sharing good practice should be seen as helping policymakers to understand different approaches, rather than presenting them with fully formed policy solutions. It should not just include showcasing final projects or achievements, but also the processes through which they were developed – for example, where migrants themselves have been involved in reflection and policy development.

The UK could play a key role in sharing its own good practices so far. While there is still a long way to go, the UK government's ongoing pilots of community-based alternatives to detention mean it can speak positively of how far it has already come. It could be useful to share experiences from the UK with other governments, including the rationale for initiating this journey in the first place, as well as the challenges, thinking and evolution behind the UK's approach, and how it has collaborated with civil society.

²² This commitment is found in paragraph 64 of the GCR.

Using the GCM's underlying principles to reduce detention

Beyond the GCM's specific objectives, deep consideration of its underlying principles can help change the way states across the world understand 'well-managed' migration and the role of detention within this.

For example, following the GCM's guiding principle of 'international cooperation' could mean helping transit countries improve legal frameworks and migrants' access to rights, services and livelihood opportunities, rather than putting pressure on them to stem movement.

Likewise, while the GCM firmly upholds state sovereignty, its guiding principles also promote a 'people-centred and rights-based' approach. By recognising the importance of migrants' needs alongside state interests, and by emphasising state obligations to protect and fulfil migrants' rights, the GCM could help shift governments away from a 'knee jerk' security and enforcement view, which is often linked to the increased use of detention.

Finally, the GCM's commitment to a 'whole of society' approach is central to limiting detention and working towards alternatives. This includes building constructive partnerships between governments, civil society and organisations providing wider community support (without necessarily focusing on people in detention or even on migrants). Critically, it is important that migrants themselves can contribute their lived experience to inform discussions around current practices and reforms. This could mean ensuring they are represented in government working groups or meetings dealing with detention.



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5

Ensuring migrants' access to essential services



Photo © Noemi Monu / BRC

Summary:

- The GCM includes a commitment to ensure that all migrants, regardless of status, can exercise their human rights through safe access to basic services, while allowing states to limit more comprehensive services to nationals or regular migrants (as long as discrimination, as defined within national and international law, does not occur).
- Day-to-day realities do not reflect commitments contained in the GCM on migrants' access to basic services. Migrants face many barriers to accessing services, from eligibility restrictions and high costs, to language barriers and lack of information about rights and entitlements.
- Migration journeys and experiences of immigration systems often create or worsen mental health difficulties, yet specialised mental health services can remain inaccessible.
- Inadequate access to reliable and accessible information about rights and entitlements can affect overall access to services. This is exacerbated by the often complex nature of the information being presented and lack of trust in official sources.
- Opportunities for advancing progress in this area include: rooting approaches in migrants' specific needs and experiences; joining up national and international conversations with local investment; and linking this work in with wider efforts to reduce vulnerabilities among migrants.

5.1 Access to basic services in the GCM

Migrants' access to basic services is a core issue within the GCM. It is most directly addressed in Objective 15 of the GCM (to 'provide access to basic services for migrants'), but there are many other relevant commitments throughout the text. These include commitments on access to information (Objective 3), addressing and reducing vulnerabilities (Objective 7), trafficking (Objective 10), inclusion and social cohesion (Objective 16), and return and reintegration (Objective 21).

Throughout negotiations on the GCM, migrants' access to basic services was one of the most controversial areas. One particular area of contention was how the text would handle access to services for irregular migrants. While there were calls from civil society to safeguard the lives and dignity of all migrants, many states wanted to distinguish between citizens, regular and irregular migrants in providing services, and the GCM needed to strike a balance.

The final text of the GCM found what the discussion participants considered to be a decent compromise, including a number of key provisions:

- A commitment to 'ensure that all migrants, regardless of their migration status, can exercise their human rights through safe access to basic services', while also stating 'notwithstanding that nationals and regular migrants may be entitled to more comprehensive service provision, while ensuring that any differential treatment must be based on law, proportionate, pursue a legitimate aim, in accordance with international human rights law'.
- A commitment to 'ensure that cooperation between service providers and immigration authorities does not exacerbate vulnerabilities of irregular migrants by compromising their safe access to basic services'. While stopping short of using the word 'firewall' – a term which many in civil society advocated for during negotiations – this commitment in some ways captures the spirit of such provisions.

5.2 Global and UK trends

There is a global 'implementation gap' between commitments contained in the GCM on access to basic services and the day-to-day realities experienced by migrants.

Common barriers migrants face accessing basic services across the world and in the UK include:

- **eligibility restrictions**
- **high service costs**, including for more specialised services
- **differing approaches** across providers of different services and in different locations
- **lack of understanding, clear information and awareness** among migrants about their rights and entitlements – including whether costs will be incurred accessing services
- **insufficient training and understanding among government departments, local authorities and frontline staff** concerning migrants’ specific needs, experiences and entitlements
- **fear of arrest or deportation** when accessing services, particularly where receiving services depends on the presentation of immigration documents, where service providers are legally required to report people to immigration enforcement, or where data sharing takes place
- specific challenges with access to services while people are in **detention**
- **cultural barriers and stigma** associated with accessing particular services (e.g. mental health)
- **language barriers**, particularly where interpreters are not provided or not easily accessible – even where interpreters are available migrants may still find it difficult to accurately convey their concerns
- **gaps or changes in support linked to immigration systems and case management**, including due to bureaucratic errors or changes in status
- **criminalisation of humanitarian assistance.**

There is a particularly noticeable gap in specialised mental health services available, exacerbated by disagreement over whether this constitutes ‘basic’ healthcare. For many, mental health support is not perceived as ‘urgent’ and often services are not readily available or accessible to migrants. This is despite the fact that migrants very often need mental health support. They can experience trauma during their journeys and this can be compounded

by experiences with immigration systems in destination countries. In the UK, for example, mental health difficulties can stem from restricted rights to work while in the asylum system, as well as long timeframes for decisions and reporting requirements. Cases of depression and PTSD among migrants and asylum seekers in the UK are common, and even the most resilient people regularly end up affected.

“If you are relying on a government support, you just do not live your life in rest, because that support is attached to your immigration status, and as your status changes you will be left without any support. I still have problem renting a flat, because I am being asked by the landlord if I have a right to remain here.”

Migrant representative

“My children and I did not tell anyone that we were asylum seekers because we were afraid of being bullied and treated badly. We used birth certificates to show as an ID. This shows that there is an element of discrimination in accessing services.”

Migrant representative

Challenges accessing services can create or worsen situations of vulnerability. This could be due to critical needs remaining unaddressed, as well as mental health impacts of being unable to access services and social isolation. Challenges accessing different services can compound one another, so for instance, issues finding suitable accommodation can affect physical and mental health, creating layers of vulnerabilities.

However, service providers may find it very challenging to provide appropriate services. For example, uneven distribution of migrants and asylum seekers among different regions in a host country may put greater pressure on services in certain areas, particularly where these services are not adequately resourced by local authorities. In the UK, for example, services are perceived as being more pressed in the small pool of dispersal areas, as well as main entry points such as Kent and around airports.

5.3 Access to information

Access to reliable and accessible information about services and entitlements is one of the most pressing obstacles to accessing services. It is not just migrant communities themselves who lack information, but also government departments, local authorities and frontline service delivery staff. In the UK, for example, staff and volunteers providing services are sometimes unaware of migrants' specific needs and what certain groups are entitled to under national frameworks.

The details of who can access what may be complex, but can have significant impacts on migrants. For example, UK distinctions between those seeking asylum and those considered 'economic migrants' can affect people's entitlements (depending on the types of services they are trying to access), as can distinctions based on whether someone's residence in the UK is temporary or permanent. All of which is complicated by differences between local, national and devolved administrations. Moreover, where people have travelled through multiple countries, their entitlements may vary throughout their migration journeys, according to different national frameworks. Factors like these make it harder to communicate clearly and to help people understand complicated national policy frameworks and entitlements.

Migrants may struggle to access information where official sources (like websites or brochures) are not easily accessible or are not translated into languages they understand. Moreover, migrants may not trust official sources anyway, particularly where they have had negative experiences with authorities either in a host country or at other points during their journeys.

The most trusted information about services is often spread via migrants' own networks, but it is important not to rely on this channel alone, since more socially isolated migrants (for example in the UK, where there are dispersal policies) can miss out on information. Misinformation about entitlements and service availability may also spread quickly through informal networks, and this can cause misunderstandings or even make people lose trust in the system. Similarly, where people have had negative experiences trying to access services, word of this may spread and deter others from accessing support.

"I had relatively positive experience of accessing healthcare in my life in different countries as a migrant and asylum seeker. I had my pregnancy in the UK for my children and I had no difficulty accessing the healthcare and accessing the GPs and midwives. However, the biggest challenge for me was the language barrier. I was not able to express my concerns."

Migrant representative

5.4 Challenges for GCM implementation

Despite making key commitments, the text of the GCM contains ambiguities that may hinder implementation in this area. The GCM does not include a definition of what is deemed a 'basic service', and although this can be seen as positive in that it avoids rigid interpretations, it also leaves the scope of the GCM's commitments vague. This is true both in terms of what kinds of services might be considered 'basic', but also what a basic level of service might be.

Kinds of services which could be considered basic include healthcare (including mental health), education, information, access to justice, shelter/ accommodation and support to prevent destitution (including providing food and other items).

Healthcare is one area where distinctions of level can be complex and have important implications. For example, even if it is not considered controversial to view healthcare as a basic service, our discussions explored whether this should extend to non-emergency, primary or secondary healthcare. There are similar distinctions between primary, secondary and tertiary education, raising the question of what level of education can be considered 'basic'.

Another challenge with the text of the GCM is that while it acknowledges that states are primarily responsible for fulfilling migrants' basic rights, it does not fully reflect the contributions migrant and diaspora communities themselves make to providing services.

5.5 Realising the GCM's ambitions: Making migrants' access to services a reality

Our discussions highlighted three areas of opportunity:

- rooting actions in migrants' specific needs and experiences
- joining up local, national and international conversations to match commitments with investment
- linking this work with wider efforts to reduce vulnerabilities among migrants.

Rooting actions in migrants' specific needs and experiences

Progress towards improving migrants' access to basic services will continue to meet challenges unless these improvements are rooted in the experiences of migrants themselves. Migrants should be able to contribute their own perspectives of challenges they have faced accessing services, they should be involved in efforts to design solutions, and their voices should be included in policy discussions.

This will ensure that services are more appropriate and effective, and that they are tailored to specific needs which migrants may be likely to have. Such needs might include mental health support, translation, or care for survivors of gender-based violence.

Migrants could support services by providing training to staff, helping to improve understanding of migrants' experiences at the point of service delivery, although there may be some challenges achieving this at scale in the public sector.

Access to information could also be improved through greater engagement with migrant communities. Efforts in this area should focus on who is best placed to provide information, as well as the most effective channels for doing so. This should be rooted in an understanding of how specific groups actually access information (as opposed to how responders may think they do) and which sources of information they trust. One participant cited the effective use of radio programmes to spread messages among refugee communities in Bangladesh – many of whom are not literate but who had traditionally used radio as a form of receiving information prior to displacement.

Participants also spoke about networks of trust among diaspora communities as a promising channel for conveying information. Though some mechanisms can be universal, it is important to listen to specific groups, asking them what they need, what they prefer and who they trust, so that information can be conveyed accordingly.

Joining up local, national and international conversations to match commitments with investment

It is important to ensure that local, national and international conversations in this area are joined up. For example, ensuring that commitments made by governments as part of the GCM are integrated into ongoing conversations at the national level about migrants' access to services. Ultimately, the success of commitments under the GCM will depend on whether states and other organisations can match high-level commitments with national and local planning, as well as supporting this work with funding.

Making links with efforts to address and reduce vulnerabilities

Finally, it is important that links are made between Objective 15 of the GCM (directly covering access to basic services) and wider objectives, for instance commitments to address and reduce vulnerabilities (Objective 7). Migrants in vulnerable situations often have the greatest need for support, while also facing the greatest challenges accessing relevant services. In many cases they need help due to vulnerabilities created or worsened by wider migration policies and processes (for example where these factors have affected their mental health). Efforts to avoid creating or exacerbating vulnerabilities could in turn help reduce migrants' needs for basic services, while supporting their ability to access services where needed.

6

Saving lives: Spotlight on the Sahel



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Summary:

- While overall numbers of people migrating across the Sahel have remained constant in recent years, the routes have shifted and are becoming increasingly dangerous.
- Common risks experienced by migrants in the Sahel include financial and physical abuse, detention, disappearance and family separation, trafficking, gender-based violence (GBV), accident, injury and risks of death.
- Humanitarian workers in the Sahel often find it difficult to identify people at risk due to challenges such as stigma or fear of repercussions if migrants come forward for support. There are also gaps in national response capacities in the Sahel, particularly in terms of specialist services.
- While the GCM has not yet filtered down to country-level progress in the Sahel, it can be used to help coordinate strategies at a regional level, while also providing a way to frame challenging discussions.

6.1 Protection from death, disappearance, family separation and violations of migrants' rights in the GCM

The final roundtable discussion focused on how GCM implementation could help protect people from death, disappearance, family separation and violations of their rights during a migratory journey. The discussion focused specifically on the Sahel as a case study, as a globally significant and particularly high-risk route. It is also likely that trends in the region will grow increasingly complex due to the effects of climate change.

The GCM contains several commitments aimed at protecting migrants from risks along migration routes. Indeed, its guiding principles include maintaining a human rights-based and people-centred approach. This area is also addressed through specific objectives, including:

- **Objective 7:** To address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration.
- **Objective 8:** To save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants.
- **Objective 10:** To prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.
- **Objective 15:** To provide access to basic services for migrants.

6.2 Risks in the Sahel: Outlining trends

At present migration in the Sahel is characterised by mixed movements, largely within the region, although some continue their journeys towards Europe. While numbers of people crossing the Sahel have remained constant in recent years, the routes they are taking have shifted and become riskier. Incentives are being offered to strengthen counter-trafficking and counter-smuggling operations in the Sahel, and though these measures are not reducing numbers of people on the move, they are steering migrants towards more dangerous routes. In particular, there is a concern that recent bilateral agreements aimed at reinforcing border controls along routes leading to Europe – for example agreements forged between Italy and Libya, or between Spain and Morocco – are increasing risks for migrants.

Risks faced by migrants in the Sahel include:

- **Financial, psychological, sexual and physical abuse or torture**, often inflicted by security forces, border guards, gangs, armed groups, smugglers and traffickers, sometimes resulting in death.
- **Detention, disappearance and family separation**, including difficulties communicating with family members (particularly where people are detained).

- **Trafficking, slavery and gender-based violence (GBV).** This is a particularly acute risk for women and girls, although it affects men and boys too. The danger is so great that migrants are known to take oral contraception before beginning their journeys due to the high risk of sexual assault.
- **Death and injury due to dangerous routes being taken.** Travelling on unpaved roads to avoid detection can increase risk of injury, and the challenging nature of desert routes can also lead to death from starvation or dehydration.

A major challenge in addressing these dangers in the Sahel is the difficulty of identifying those who are at risk. People may be reluctant to come forward due to the stigma associated with specific vulnerabilities or their status as a survivor of sexual violence, torture or trafficking. For example, male survivors of sexual violence are unlikely to access support due to associated stigma. Meanwhile, the ‘criminalisation’ of migrants along the Sahel’s migration routes may mean many avoid accessing essential support for fear of repercussions.

There is also a lack of available services for vulnerable people in the Sahel. While non-specialist humanitarian workers can help people up to a certain point, they face challenges where services are simply not available to refer migrants on to for more specialist support. Participants mentioned certain countries where a lack of services affected migrants and citizens alike – for example, one participant raised the need for more specialist services such as obstetrics and gynaecology in response to risks of gender-based violence. Even where specialist services exist, they may be overstretched, resulting in a limited pool of safe and dignified services for people to be referred to. This presents an acute ethical dilemma, where frontline staff can identify at-risk people and those with specific needs or vulnerabilities but cannot act on it.

Accordingly, there is a need to strengthen national capacities, working with states, humanitarian and development organisations to improve basic standards. However, these efforts should be sensitive to the fact that providing services aimed specifically at vulnerable migrants can lead to a perceived hierarchy of migrants over nationals. Participants highlighted the need for flexible

approaches, based on a detailed understanding of appropriate responses to distinct vulnerabilities.

6.3 Applying the GCM to risks in the Sahel

A major challenge in the Sahel is the lack of regional strategies. Agencies and governments are often not doing enough to coordinate across borders, and with each country using their own systems, support is effectively divided up by national borders. Finding a regional coordination mechanism for GCM implementation is therefore challenging, yet potentially very valuable. There is a need to establish common and complementary objectives to maintain greater coherence along migration routes in the Sahel, while ensuring that any new mechanisms are aligned with existing structures. One option might be to use the influence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

While the GCM has not yet shown tangible effects at country level in the Sahel, it has given different states and agencies a common framework for discussion and a standard to strive towards. For example, the GCM can help build consensus on how success is measured in migration policymaking. While some European policymakers may consider recent interventions in the Sahel a ‘success’ because they have reduced arrivals in Europe, from a humanitarian perspective there have been critical increases in protection risks and humanitarian needs. The GCM could be useful in helping drive agreement that success in migration policymaking depends not just on migration management objectives, but on wider objectives linked to its human rights-based and people-centred approach.

Finally, participants pointed out that the GCM’s commitment to developing legal migration pathways could help address risks in the Sahel by providing an alternative to more dangerous routes. It was emphasised that attempts to advance this conversation should be rooted in an understanding of geo-political dynamics and where there might be space to propose new pilots. However, one participant expressed that – while there is growing commitment towards legal pathways – the focus on sending people back to their countries of origin far outweighs this. The example was given of one European country offering €300 million for a project aimed at facilitating these return journeys, compared to €3 million for work exploring legal pathways.

Recommendations

One year on from its adoption, the GCM presents a significant opportunity to ensure a more people-centred and rights-based approach to human mobility.

By using the GCM as a framework, there is an opportunity to address important humanitarian concerns which affect the lives of people on the move across the world and in the UK, while ensuring a more effective and coordinated approach to migration movements.

The roundtable discussions suggest a number of recommendations to achieve effective implementation of the GCM in areas of humanitarian concern. These recommendations include those which were directly raised as part of the discussions, as well as later analysis. The recommendations are directed primarily towards UK-based organisations – including those who took part in this work – but many of the recommendations may have wider relevance.

These recommendations lay out just some of the first steps that organisations in the UK – and more broadly – can take to ensure that the GCM lives up to its promise. As the GCM moves into its second year of implementation, there is now an opportunity for all stakeholders to take decisive action aimed at making its principles a reality.

7.1 Cross-cutting considerations for the GCM's implementation

Building a strong foundation for the GCM

The UK government and other organisations should use the early phases of the GCM's implementation to build a solid foundation at national, regional and global levels. This should include:

- **Continued investment in a robust international architecture.** This should include a strong focus on accountability and independent assessment of progress within follow-up mechanisms such as the UN Secretary-General's report and regional review processes in 2020 and the International Migration Review Forum in 2022.

- **Developing appropriate structures and planning at national and local levels to complement multilateral developments.**

The UK government should develop appropriate national arrangements in the UK to deliver effective GCM implementation. This includes the development of 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approaches (see below), as well as:

- Developing a cross-government vision or strategy for implementing the GCM, whether or not in the format of a formal implementation plan.

- Considering how, in addition to its specific objectives, the less tangible ‘spirit of the GCM’ can be brought into UK policy. For example, distilling this into a more manageable checklist of principles to embed in future projects, partnerships and policy relating to migration.
- **Benchmarking the UK government’s starting point for GCM implementation**, mapping the UK government’s existing domestic and international policy and practice against the GCM’s objectives and wider commitments.

Taking a ‘whole of government’ approach in the UK

The UK government should take a ‘whole of government’ approach for GCM implementation.

- This should include steps to **increase engagement with the GCM** beyond those in government who are already aware of it, in particular promoting awareness among domestic-facing departments and local authorities. Steps to accomplish this could include:
 - Mapping UK government departments, teams and working groups for whom the GCM’s commitments are relevant. This could mean identifying wider departments or entities which should be brought into cross-government planning around the GCM, as well as those for whom it would be relevant to be informed.
 - Workshops on the GCM provided to relevant departments or teams, to discuss what could be useful from the GCM for existing strategies in specific policy areas.
- **Introducing references to the GCM and its principles** into relevant strategy documents and policies across different departments.

Building a ‘whole of society’ approach in the UK to support the GCM

UK-based organisations – including the UK government (central government, local authorities and devolved administrations), NGOs, migrant and diaspora organisations and individuals, UK-based international organisations, the private sector, think tanks and academia – should work together to **develop a ‘whole of society’ approach in support of the GCM.**

- This could be spearheaded by organisations who have engaged more substantially with the GCM so far, but should also involve a wider set of UK-based organisations who are involved with UK domestic and international migration policy.
- In particular, civil society can play a role in:
 - **promoting and advocating** for the GCM
 - **convening** discussions or **‘championing’** thematic areas in the GCM
 - independently **benchmarking** national progress
 - promoting and sharing **best practices** linked to the GCM.
- The UK government should consider how it can support and engage with the development of such an approach.

Ensuring that migrants’ lived experience is central

Migrants’ experiences and voices should have a meaningful influence on future approaches to implementing the GCM – and migration policymaking more broadly – including through:

- **Efforts to increase the inclusion, participation and leadership of migrants** themselves in strategic discussions about implementation of the GCM and migration policymaking at all levels. Any such efforts should focus on grounding the GCM’s more abstract principles in migrants’ real-life experiences.
- **Outreach by well-placed civil society organisations, diaspora or migrant-led organisations** to spread accessible information about the GCM to migrant communities and generate discussion. Migrants should be able to give their perspectives on how the GCM could be a useful tool, opening up opportunities for their wider participation and co-creating solutions for implementation.

Building support and leadership for the GCM

Everyone working to support the GCM's implementation should aim to build leadership for the GCM, while recognising that this involves navigating difficult environments at national and global levels. This could include:

- **Designating 'champions' for the GCM** at different levels and among different groups, including within governments and across departments, among civil society (including migrants themselves, migrant and diaspora organisations), parliamentarians and the private sector.
- **Exploring lessons learned from the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** in terms of building a 'brand' for a global framework, while considering how these can be adapted to the GCM's challenging political background.

Building on links between different objectives to avoid siloed ways of working

All organisations should work together to avoid siloed ways of working and build on links between different GCM objectives, as well as between the GCM and other frameworks. This could include:

- **Mapping the common ground between different GCM objectives** (as well as overlap with the Global Compact on Refugees) and making efforts to bring appropriate departments and organisations together as GCM implementation continues (for example, those focused on vulnerabilities and legal pathways; those working respectively on access to basic services in the GCM and GCR; or those working on GCM commitments on legal pathways and those working on GCR commitments on resettlement and third-country solutions).
- **Increased efforts to bring together teams working on the GCM and GCR respectively.** This will require improved coordination at an international level (for example, considering how the International Migration Review Forum will speak to the GCR's counterpart Global Refugee Forum), as well as national efforts to bring

together relevant organisations. More joined-up working in terms of the UK government's engagement with the two global compacts, which could be articulated as part of the cross-government strategy for the GCM proposed above.

- Efforts by government and civil society organisations to bring the GCM into discussions and working groups focused on wider frameworks, for example the **COP climate change summits or the SDGs**, and to convene groups of specialists focused on these respective frameworks to discuss common ground.

7.2 Prioritising vulnerabilities

The following actions could be taken by the UK government and other UK-based organisations to help address and reduce vulnerabilities as part of GCM implementation:

- **The UK government should agree a working definition of 'vulnerabilities' in the context of migration** which is consistent across government departments. Civil society could play an active role in this, ensuring it is informed by migrants' experiences.
- All organisations, including the UK government, should try to **more fully understand the complex vulnerabilities** experienced by migrants – both in the UK and internationally, and at different points in their journeys. Such efforts should prioritise the collection of qualitative data (including case studies informed by migrants' own experiences and perspectives) in addition to statistics.
- Efforts should be made to help **local actors** – including local authorities, diaspora groups and migrants themselves – to address vulnerabilities experienced among migrant communities, and there should be investment in their capacity to do so.
- **The UK government should include efforts to reduce vulnerabilities alongside those to address them as part of GCM implementation.** This should include efforts to understand the humanitarian effects of migration-related government policies in the UK and internationally, mapping where policies may create or worsen vulnerabilities.

- Efforts are needed to bring together parallel conversations on migrants' vulnerabilities and their contributions to sustainable development. This could include:
 - Convening conversations between organisations working on these respective areas to explore how their work and priorities might cross over.
 - Undertaking case studies to understand how vulnerabilities may affect opportunities for sustainable development in the context of particular issues or country/regional contexts.

7.3 Detention as a last resort

The following actions could be taken by the UK government and other UK-based organisations to help fulfil GCM commitments towards detention as a last resort:

- **The UK government can use the GCM as a platform to share good practice** from its experiences of reducing the use of detention in the UK and developing alternatives – sharing not just the end results but also the rationale and principles behind its approach.
- **The UK government should consider action in areas where its practices fall short of the GCM's commitments.** Key areas to consider include the use of a time limit for detention and the fact that it is still detaining children.
- All organisations in the UK should work towards building a **whole of society approach** to help meet GCM commitments around detention. This approach should include organisations with specific expertise in detention, those working more widely in communities and – crucially – migrants themselves.
- **The UK government should assess how its actions affect transit countries,** exploring whether any UK financial or foreign policy actions are increasing pressure on transit countries to detain migrants, and whether there are alternative approaches that could instead relieve such pressures. The UK government should likewise encourage other governments to conduct such an assessment.

7.4 Ensuring migrants' access to essential services

The following actions could be taken by the UK government and other UK-based organisations to help fulfil GCM commitments on access to basic services:

- The UK government should consult with civil society partners and migrants themselves to agree a **working definition of 'basic services'** for use in implementation of the GCM (including the type and level of services included).
- Any such definition should prioritise **mental health** as a key basic service for migrants.
- Based on this, the UK government and other UK-based organisations could begin **comprehensively mapping** the barriers migrants face accessing services in the UK, in addition to specific contexts of interest internationally, along with possible solutions. Migrants themselves should play a key role in informing this work.
- Both at home and abroad, the UK government should provide or support **reliable and accessible information to migrants** – as a basic service in itself but also to facilitate access to wider services. This should include:
 - considering if entitlements are unnecessarily complex and could be streamlined
 - ensuring that improvements in this area are based on detailed understanding and assessment of the channels migrants already use to access information and which sources they trust
 - acknowledging the central role migrants and diaspora networks already play in providing information and supporting their capacity to do so.
- Work to improve access to services for migrants both in the UK and abroad should explore how these efforts can **make the most of migrants' own contributions.** For example, exploring how migrants could play a role in training frontline staff so that services are accessible and appropriate.

7.5 Saving lives: Spotlight on the Sahel

The following actions could be taken by the UK government and other UK-based stakeholders to help fulfil GCM commitments on saving lives and preventing critical risks. While these recommendations focus specifically on mixed movements in the Sahel, they may have broader relevance:

- Humanitarian organisations, host and donor governments should ensure that their **interventions in the Sahel are consistent with the GCM's principles**, prioritising a person-centred and rights-based approach. They should also consider specific GCM objectives aimed at addressing risks.
- The UK government should consider how it could help advance a **regional protection strategy** in the Sahel, under the leadership of appropriate regional coordination mechanisms (for example, ECOWAS) and grounded in regional efforts to advance GCM implementation.
- The UK government, alongside humanitarian organisations, should also consider efforts to strengthen responses to risks at the **national level**. This should include:
 - Supporting field responders' capacity to identify individuals who are at risk and addressing barriers which prevent people asking humanitarian organisations or authorities for support.
 - Investment in programming to improve response capacities, both by strengthening national systems and through more targeted interventions.
- All actors, including the UK government, should ensure that discussions on risks in the Sahel are linked to ongoing conversations around the development of **legal pathways** as a key way to reduce the use of dangerous irregular migration routes.



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