

# STATUS OF GCM IMPLEMENTATION in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan & Sri Lanka



## 1. Background<sup>1</sup>

India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—five major South Asian countries with emigrant populations—adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in December 2018.<sup>2</sup> The Compact seeks to make migration people centric and human rights centric, child sensitive, gender responsive and beneficial for all through collaboration and a whole-of-government approach and whole-of-society approach. Migration is an important and integral part of South Asia as it remains one of the major regions of origin for international labour migrants.<sup>3</sup> The region also receives huge remittance from the emigrant population which contributes to the macro and micro economic growth of these countries. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Malaysia are the major destinations for the migrant workers from this region. Migrants from the region continue to experience practices of unscrupulous recruitment, incidents of deaths and injuries, wage theft and exploitation, and lack of access to justice. The impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated their vulnerabilities, exposing the situation of poor migration governance and inter-country collaboration, thus calling for a critical review of the commitments concerning the protection of migrants and their rights, made through the GCM. As state parties to the GCM, the countries are obligated to conduct reviews of the progress at national and regional levels in implementing the GCM and submit reports periodically in regional and internal forums such as the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF). All GCM member states, including the aforementioned South Asian countries and multi-stakeholders, will meet in New York from 17 – 20 May 2022 to share the status of implementation of GCM and the progress made thus far.

In this backdrop, South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) reviewed the implementation of selected decent work-related objectives under the GCM such as fair and ethical recruitment, wage protection, access to justice as well as gender responsive policies and whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, in the five South Asian countries. The assessment<sup>4</sup> was done based on review of literature, information collected through virtual and in-person interviews with representatives of trade unions, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and International Organisations (IOs) in the five countries, and insights and suggestions provided by the participants in the Sub-Regional Consultation on the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) held from 20 – 21 April 2022 in Kathmandu by SARTUC and Migration Forum Asia (MFA) with support from Solidarity Center. This brief draws on the key findings and recommendations from the full assessment report, Assessment of GCM Implementation in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

## 2. Skill Development and Skill Certification

Objective 18 of the GCM calls on member states to ‘invest in skills development and facilitate recognition of skills, qualifications and competences’ through building of bilateral and global skills partnerships. In fact, skills development helps enter, remain in and succeed in the labour market as well as to enjoy decent work. Increasingly, the skill development agenda for prospective and returnee migrants has accorded priority in the South Asian sub-region in the recent years. Separate institutions have been set up in all South Asian countries to provide both short-term and long-term skills development training and courses. For example, Technical Training Centers (TTCs) across Bangladesh have been offering a 4-year Diploma course and a 2-year trade and secondary level vocational course along with various other kinds of short-term courses extending from 1-6 months provided in five different languages—Japanese, Korean, English, Arabic and Cantonese. India has signed BLAs with the governments and other institutions in some of the CoDs to connect Indian labour migrants with employers desiring various kinds of skills. In Nepal, the Employment-oriented Skill Development Training Operation Procedure, 2019 has been introduced that provides guidelines to the FEB, MOLESS for organising skill development training for migrant workers in coordination with other government and private organisations.

<sup>1</sup> This brief was prepared by Dr. Jeevan Baniya. This publication was made possible through support by the Solidarity Centre.

<sup>2</sup> ‘The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)’, International Organization for Migration, accessed 29 April 2020, [iom.int/global-compact-migration](https://iom.int/global-compact-migration)

<sup>3</sup> IOM, *Asia Pacific Migration Data Report* (Bangkok: International Organization for Migration, 2021), [publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/Asia-Pacific-Migration-%20Data-Report-2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/Asia-Pacific-Migration-%20Data-Report-2020.pdf); UN, *Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020: Assessing Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration* (Bangkok: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations, 2020), [unescap.org/sites/default/files/APMR2020\\_FullReport.pdf](https://unescap.org/sites/default/files/APMR2020_FullReport.pdf); M. McAuliffe and A. Triandafyllidou (eds.), *World Migration Report 2022* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2021), [publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/WMR-2022.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/WMR-2022.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The assessment was carried out with the support from Solidarity Centre.

Although some countries in South Asia such as Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka have introduced an e-system to keep record of prospective migrant workers and returnees and their skills, the uptake of such systems is very low. In India, various databases have been developed in order to connect returnee migrant workers with employers in the country, however, due to the lack of jobs/ employment opportunities in the country, most of these initiatives have not been able to produce substantive results.

## Recommendations

- National migration information systems should systematically manage records of the skill related data about the migrants and returnees so that it can help inform decisions about plans and policies and advocate for the same.
- Access of (aspirant) migrants as well as of general people, especially low skilled workers, to information about the importance and availability of the skill trainings should be ensured.
- Skills should be linked to the current and future needs of employers and the national and international labour markets.
- It is crucial to establish bilateral or multilateral recognition frameworks to certify and recognise skills acquired by youths in countries of origin. A system for online certificate accreditation and recognition of migrant workers’ skills can be set up both in the CoOs and the CoDs. Such provision should also be included in the BLAs.
- Governments of destination countries and development partners should extend assistance/grants to the countries of origin to set up and effectively operate skill training centres as well as skill certification and recognition systems. The countries and institutions should also ensure quality of the skills.

## 3. Social Protection of Migrants

Social protection for migrant workers is an important pillar of decent work. The GCM objectives 15 and 22 emphasise that all migrants, regardless of their migration status, should have access to basic services, including health care and education. Migrant workers however have limited or no social protections in the migration circle. Although some relief assistance programmes have been introduced in the subregion, they have not been able to address socio-economic needs of migrant workers. In **Nepal**, the government utilised the PMEP that provides 100 days of wage employment to the unemployed, including returnee migrant workers and informal sector workers, and made provisions for providing subsidised loans to workers unable to initiate their own business in Nepal. Likewise, the Government of **Pakistan** has launched a scheme of mandatory insurance coverage targeted at all outgoing emigrants. Under the scheme, every aspirant migrant worker is insured for up to PKR 1 million (ca USD 5,400) against a one-time premium of PKR 2,500 (ca USD 13) in the event of death or disability. **Portability of social protection** is another important issue. Migrant workers, compared to nationals of destination countries, face major legal and practical obstacles in accessing social protection benefits especially when they are outside the country, they have been insured in. Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India have all established welfare funds for the protection of migrant workers. However, such funds only provide limited benefits to migrant workers and their families. In **Sri Lanka**, immigrants have equal access to social security schemes such as the Employee Provident Fund and the Employee Trust Fund, and the Sri Lankan government has social security portability agreements with some OECD countries and the Republic of Korea.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed various protection gaps in different countries, especially the social protection deficits experienced by migrant workers who have lost their jobs, incomes and support systems, and those in irregular situations. Their access to health care and insurance coverage proved to be restricted or limited. They faced difficulties in accessing sickness and health-care benefits, and other social security benefits.

## Recommendations

- It is crucial to extend social protection to South Asian migrant workers across borders. Governments of countries of origin and destination should collaboratively work to extend social protection coverage to the migrant workers, particularly low-income remittance-recipient households or vulnerable migrant households.
- The governments of South Asian countries should negotiate with the CoDs and enter into bilateral social security agreements including through BLAs. In the agreement, provisions of portability of social protection entitlements and benefits which migrants are entitled to should be agreed.

- Governments of South Asian countries should move towards ensuring universal social protection so that it also provides a security blanket for migrant workers and their families.
- There should be 24-hour life insurance for migrant workers both in destination countries and origin countries.

## 4. Fair and Ethical Recruitment

Objective 6 of the GCM (fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work) aims to better protect migrants against exploitations through improved recruitment mechanisms. There is significant sensitization and awareness among relevant government agencies, trade unions, CSOs, recruitment agencies and journalists about the importance and implications of enhancing fair and ethical recruitment because of the efforts and support of institutions like ILO and IOM. Governments have also incorporated this objective in their national policies and plans. For example, the Government of **Bangladesh** recently enacted two rules concerning recruitment—‘the Recruitment Agent License and Conduct Rules 2019’, and the ‘Recruitment Agents Classification Rules 2020’ which aim to enhance fair recruitment. Further, the Government of Bangladesh has established 42 District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMO) and is planning to establish such offices in 22 more districts for ensuring decentralisation of the migration process. **India** is currently drafting a new Emigration Bill to replace the Emigration Act of 1983, which is expected to bring about reforms in the recruitment process for nationals seeking employment outside India.

Some elements of fair and ethical recruitment, such as the employer pays principle, are reflected in the bilateral labour agreements signed by the government of Nepal with countries such as Jordan, the UAE, Mauritius, and Malaysia, and the Nepali government continues to advocate for the principle at home and in regional forums. The country has also been trying to regulate unscrupulous recruitment practices including by banning informal agents for recruiting migrant workers, by requiring mandatory attestation of job demands by Nepali missions abroad, establishing rapid response teams to take rapid actions against any irregularities in recruitment etc. Most recently, like Nepal, the Government of **Pakistan** has signed BLAs on labour migration with the UAE and Japan and is making efforts for signing similar agreements with other countries. Through digitization of aspirant migrants’ details through a project titled ‘Registration of Intending Emigrants Via Biometric System Linked with NADRA’ and the REFRAME project, Pakistan is trying to address abusive and fraudulent recruitment practices in line with the ILO’s General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment. **Sri Lanka** too has signed BLAs with more CoDs. The country has also developed measures to promote the ethical recruitment of its nationals at the pre-departure stage including publishing the Code of Ethical Conduct for the Licensed Foreign Employment Recruitment Agencies and the Operational Manual for Labour Sections of Sri Lankan Diplomatic Missions in Destination Countries. Likewise, the countries in the subregion have made significant efforts to ensure access to information on safe and beneficial migration; the risks and opportunities in migration; the culture, weather and working conditions in CODs; and the rights and responsibilities of aspirant and returnee migrant workers through institutionalised systems such as the Career Services Office (CSO) BRAC in **Bangladesh**; the Pre-departure Orientation Training (PDOT) programme in India; PDOT centres, Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and Employment Service Centre (ESCs) at local government units in Nepal; and the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Sri Lanka.

Despite these efforts, South Asian migrant workers have been facing widespread deception and extortion in the recruitment process and are made to pay high recruitment fees. It takes around 18 months for Bangladeshi migrant workers to recover the money they pay for recruitment. In Nepal, recruitment agencies provide forged receipts to migrants to misrepresent the actual money charged. Also, despite being a champion country for objective 6 of the GCM (fair and ethical recruitment), Nepal does not even have a clear roadmap or action plan yet about how it is going to achieve that objective. Despite the efforts of the governments of South Asian countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed migrant workers’ lack of timely access to authentic information. Likewise, some recent policies such as that of the Government of Nepal that proposed a requirement for women under the age of 40 to seek approval of local government authorities to travel abroad and be in possession of insurance worth NPR 1 million (ca USD 12862) and travel expenses worth USD 1,000, are also against the principle of fair recruitment and human rights.

## Recommendations

- To curb deception and unscrupulous recruitment practices by recruitment agencies and agents, governments should strengthen investigation and oversight.
- The government agencies and officials should effectively enforce existing laws and punish those involved in unscrupulous recruitment practices in a timely manner. This can help reduce the high migration cost borne by the migrants.
- For fair and transparent recruitment, it is crucial to enhance and utilize digital systems of recruitment and service provision for aspirant migrants, migrants, and returnees.
- GCM champion countries like Nepal should develop and implement clear plans of action to achieve the objective they have committed to as champion countries. The countries also should also ensure that their policies are in line with the GCM.
- It is important to enhance migrant information systems to provide up-to-date information to the migrants and their families including about policy decisions of the authorities with regard to repatriation and return during periods of crises and conflicts and ensure access to information for migrants and their families.

## 5. Protection of Migrant Workers and Their Rights

The GCM recognises the states’ obligation to ‘respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, while promoting the security and prosperity of all our communities’. The governments, including those of the South Asian countries, in collaboration with diaspora communities, international organisations and CSOs have made some efforts for the rescue, relief and repatriation of migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed various decent work deficits facing South Asian migrant workers in destination countries in the form of violations of fundamental human rights; forced labour and trafficking; wage theft, non-payment and low payment of wages; long working hours; abusive and fraudulent recruitment practices; non-compliance with OSH standards; and lack of social protection of migrants. Migrant workers also faced difficulties in accessing basic services and were subjected to psychological abuse and had their identity documents withheld, rendering them unable to return home. Migrant workers have failed to claim their wages from employers and the remedies or mediation for the same have also been grossly inaccessible or unfair. In several cases, migrant workers have also been threatened with deportation or loss of jobs or retaliation when asked for compensation. Such experiences have revealed that the existing justice systems, including transborder justice systems, have failed to protect migrant workers and their rights. Unfortunately, the governments have not even recorded the grievances of migrant workers about wage theft and rights violations. CSOs and trade unions have raised concerns and have bemoaned governments’ inaction and complacency towards these rights violations.

## Recommendations

- There should be public health and safety emergency preparedness and response measures in the CoOs and CoDs and the safety of migrants must be prioritised during crises and emergencies.
- CoDs should ensure access to adequate housing, food and accommodation services and other basic services with special consideration accorded to the needs of vulnerable migrant workers such as those in irregular situations, those in domestic work and those employed in the informal sector.
- Governments of countries of origin and destination should cooperate more closely to ensure voluntary, safe and dignified return and re-admission. Forced return should be suspended during times of crises and during pandemics. To this end, there is a need for formulating new bilateral frameworks and agreements.
- Access to justice for migrant workers must be safeguarded. Governments of both CoDs and CoOs should facilitate collection and record keeping of migrant workers’ grievances related to wage theft and exploitation and the related evidence.
- The CoDsshould ensure that employers keep all employment records, including payrolls, employee lists, and records of the hours worked safe. The workers also should be provided with the copies of the same.
- The governments of South Asia countries and the CoDs should set up a transitional justice mechanism to provide migrant workers and their families with access to remedies against exploitation, wage theft and discrimination, irrespective of their current residence, at the earliest. Judicial processes, including submission of evidence, can be facilitated through technology.

## 6. Migrant Workers’ Rights of Freedom of Association

Freedom of association and right to join workers’ association and trade unions is a fundamental right enshrined in various international legal instruments.<sup>5</sup> Unions or workers’ associations provide a platform for migrant workers to share their grievances and seek justice and redressal.<sup>6</sup> Collective bargaining has played a crucial role in protecting workers and enterprises by enhancing resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>7</sup> The GCM also states that all workers are entitled to enjoy the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, including the right to join and participate in trade unions. The Compact also strongly recognizes the role of trade unions and employers in the implementation of the Compact. In Jordan, migrant workers obtain trade union membership.<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, GEFONT, a trade union association from Nepal, has signed an agreement with partners in Kuwait, that has succeeded in getting anti-union clauses removed from model employment contracts.<sup>9</sup> Many destination countries have not, however, permitted migrant workers to obtain membership of trade unions and associations. An overwhelming majority of migrant workers from South Asian countries have not obtained membership of workers’ welfare associations and/or trade unions and many are completely unaware about such forums. Nepal, through a BLA, was able to protect the right of Nepali migrant workers in Jordanto obtain trade union membership.<sup>10</sup>

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic revealed that both CoDs and CoOs grossly failed to protect the safety and dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms of migrants. Migrant workers also lacked support in situations of crisis in countries of transit and destination. This further vindicated the need for and the importance of providing migrant workers with agency to voice their issues. However, national governments and the international community have failed to protect migrant workers’ freedom of association and right to obtain membership of trade unions and associations.

## Recommendations

- Freedom of association and workers’ agency is fundamental to furthering fair and ethical migration, decent work and protection of rights of migrant workers through collective bargaining and social dialogue. Hence, CoDs should allow migrant workers to exercise agency and engage in negotiations with employers for the enforcement of labour standards, dispute resolution and for defending the rights and welfare of migrant workers.
- Workers’ organisations in CoOs should collaborate with trade unions and partners in CoDs should accord priority to safeguarding the work, rights, and interests of migrant workers. They should be advocating for effective migration governance, skill development, and recognition and certification of skills and pressurize states to eliminate violation of migrant workers’ rights including their right to non-discrimination.
- Trade unions and their networks should make the governments and the international community accountable for their failure to protect migrant workers and their rights.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations General Assembly, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights,’ United Nations, accessed 21 August 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>; United Nations General Assembly, ‘International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families,’ United Nations Treaty Collection, accessed 29 August 2021, [https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/docs/A\\_RES\\_45\\_158-E.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/docs/A_RES_45_158-E.pdf); ‘ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up,’ accessed 29 August 2021, [https://www.ilo.org/declaration/thedeclaration/textdeclaration/WCMS\\_716594/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/declaration/thedeclaration/textdeclaration/WCMS_716594/lang-en/index.htm).

<sup>6</sup> ILO, ‘ILO: Access to Justice Often Out of Reach for Migrant Workers in South-East Asia,’ *ILO*, 26 July 2017, [ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS\\_566072/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_566072/lang-en/index.htm).

<sup>7</sup> ILO. Social Dialogue Report 2022. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_842807.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_842807.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> General Agreement in the Field of Manpower Between The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Government of Nepal. [https://migrationpolicy.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/policies/2017\\_Jordan\\_Nepal\\_Agreement.pdf](https://migrationpolicy.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/policies/2017_Jordan_Nepal_Agreement.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Nepal–Qatar Freedom of Association.” *Five–Corridors Project*. Accessed April 03, 2022, <https://fivecorridorsproject.org/nepal-qatar/nepal-qatar-freedom-of-association>

<sup>10</sup> General Agreement in the Field of Manpower Between The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Government of Nepal. [https://migrationpolicy.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/policies/2017\\_Jordan\\_Nepal\\_Agreement.pdf](https://migrationpolicy.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/policies/2017_Jordan_Nepal_Agreement.pdf)

## 7. Participation and Engagement: Adherence to the Whole-of-Government and the Whole-of-Society Approach

The Compact is based on the whole-of-government and whole-of-society guiding principles, which calls for inclusion of actors at all levels and sectors of the government, as well as migrants, diaspora communities, local communities, civil society members, academia, the private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions, national human rights institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders (para 44), for implementation of GCM. In the countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, there have been some discussions and consultations among limited stakeholders including on formulating plans and policies as well as conducting reviews of GCM implementation.

Bangladesh has established the National Steering Committee headed by the Prime Minister to guide and monitor implementation of the SDG goal 10.7.1. Likewise, some stakeholders associated with migration are involved in the National Labour Migration Forum. The participation and role of civil society in this Forum has also been widely recognized. In Bangladesh, trade unionists recognise that they are invited by the government and the concerned ministries to meetings to ask for suggestions on decreasing/reducing migration costs. Likewise, consultations are held from time to time with journalists to discuss various migration-related issues. In India, ‘eMigration’ was launched as a digital initiative to automate the operations of all key stakeholders in the emigration cycle. The central government of India has signed various MoUs with the state governments such as those of Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand to strengthen Inter-State Coordination Mechanism for smooth implementation of the activities in the source and destination areas of migrant workers. Similarly, the Government in India also collaborates with Central Trade Unions and employers’ organisations to discuss issues related to labour migration. In Nepal, MoLESS, with technical support from ILO and IOM, has been holding consultations with CSOs, trade unions, journalists, academia, private recruitment agencies, and government agencies on various occasions. In recent years, it has also started seeking inputs from other stakeholders before they participate in bilateral meetings or work on revising existing BLAs or conclude new ones. In Pakistan too, a collaborative approach exists between the government and other stakeholders to deal with issues of labour migration. UN agencies such as the ILO have been constantly lobbying with the government of Pakistan to pay more attention towards implementing GCM goals. In Sri Lanka too, several inter-ministerial coordination bodies such as the National Border Management Committee, the National Advisory Committee on Labour Migration, the National Steering Committee on Return and Reintegration for Labour Migrants have been set up to deal with different migration related issues. Sri Lanka also collaborates with the civil society in agenda-setting and the implementation of migration-related issues. For example, its national multi-stakeholder consultations on GCM included partners from NGOs, civil society, trade unions, academia and the media. The country also engages with the private sector on migration related issues.

Evidence also suggests that policies and plans including GCM related action plans in the South Asian subregion have been formulated without or limited participation of relevant stakeholders. Migrant workers and their associations continue to be pervasively excluded, exploited, and marginalised, and are denied space and opportunity to advocate for putting the human rights and labour rights of workers at the forefront of the political and policy agenda. Even when stakeholders participate in meetings and consultations, their participation is not meaningful but ritualistic instead. There was also a gross lack of international cooperation about rescue, repatriation, and safety of migrant workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The voluntary national report (VNR) submitted by the governments were also prepared without proper review and consultations. Nevertheless, there have been some notable initiatives in the countries under study. While countries like Bangladesh and Nepal seem to be taking several initiatives, Sri Lanka and Pakistan have taken fewer initiatives on that front. There are also barriers such as unwillingness on the part of bureaucrats and political leadership to follow the whole-of-government and the whole-of-society approach. Likewise, coordination between UN agencies responsible to support the stakeholders in implementing the GCM in line with the whole-of-government and the whole-of-society approach is also very weak.

## Recommendations

- The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing responses have further vindicated the need for and the importance of all actors in the protection and support of migrant workers as well as their meaningful participation in decision

making about policies and plans including those related to rehabilitation, recovery, and integration.

- It is essential to develop proper mechanisms and modality for consultations and discussions on issues related to migrants and migration. A conducive environment should be created for open discussions and all stakeholders must be receptive to critical opinions and feedback.
- Trade unions, CSOs, migrant workers and UN agencies should encourage and make the governments accountable to their commitments to adhere to the whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach.
- The governments of South Asian countries, especially the core ministries with responsibilities with regard to migration and migrants, should foster meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement and meaningful participation of relevant government agencies at central and subnational levels of governance in all steps of decision making about policies, plans, implementation, review and follow up. Review and reporting on the implementation of GCM, including the drafting of national voluntary reports, should be done with proper, adequate and meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders including migrant workers and their networks.
- There should be sufficient coordination within and between governments, and with relevant stakeholders at the central and local levels of governments.
- The UN Network on Migration needs to make concerted efforts to ensure synergy among UN agencies in the South Asian countries and to ensure that governments also follow the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches while key decisions are made regarding migration and migrant workers.
- As highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, there should be close and effective collaboration between diplomatic missions, trade unions, human rights organisations, CSOs, academia and journalists for better protection and support of migrant workers.
- In addition to the fund available from the United Nation’s Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, more resources are needed from the destination countries or development partners for improving skills, recruitment practices and governance, and safer migration in South Asian countries including for capacity enhancement of government agencies and migrant workers’ networks and trade unions.
- In the platforms like ADD and GCM, there should be serious and open discussions and reviews about the failure or inaction on the part of governments and employers as well as the failure of the existing migration frameworks to protect migrants and their rights during the COVID-19 situation.

## 8. Policies

- It is essential to develop inclusive disaster, pandemic and crises preparedness, prevention, response, and recovery measures that protect migrant workers and their rights irrespective of their migratory status.
- During crises, disasters and pandemic situations, CoDs should have flexible policies for regularisation of some migrant workers particularly those in vulnerable situations, providing amnesty to migrant workers without visas or documents to return home, or providing resident permit extensions etc.
- As per the commitments expressed regarding the ratification and implementation of relevant instruments on labour migration, labour rights, decent work and forced labour, there should be proactive and strong advocacy and pressure on the countries of origin and destination to ratify important ILO conventions namely C189, C87, C98, C155, C190. Governments of South Asian countries should work at regional and international levels to make sure that CoDs ratify these conventions.
- Policies and plans of all tiers of governments about employment and migration should be grounded in empirical evidence, and there should be gender-sensitive provisions that facilitate safe and dignified migration as well as sustainable reintegration of migrants.
- Policies and practices should ensure equal treatment of migrants regardless of their migration status, gender and whether they work in the informal or the formal economy.