

**Civil Society Days 2015, 12-13 October 2015**

**Theme 4: Achieving goals for migrant empowerment and action for human development**

ACTION PAPER FOR WORKING SESSIONS 4.1<sup>1</sup>

**Beyond Xenophobia: materializing social inclusion of migrants and diaspora.**  
*Monday 12 October, 1.30 – 5pm.*

**1. INTRODUCTION TO ISSUE:**

This Working Session will be about how to change public perception of migrants, how to combat and prevent xenophobia, and instead ensure the social inclusion of migrants and diaspora into societies. Despite growing recognition that migrants and diaspora are agents of development and add social, and economic capital to the countries where they are, as well as their countries of heritage, it seems that negative perceptions of migrants persists in many countries. While the issues of xenophobia and social inclusion have not been central to the GFMD agenda in recent year, it might very well be “the missing link” in the migration and development debate. Consistently, in evaluations and surveys about the GFMD, civil society indicates the need to add xenophobia, creating public support for migration and social inclusion and cohesion, as a central theme to the agenda.

In the words of Joanne Irving, of the Joint Migration and Development Initiative: *“Negative perceptions have a direct effect on the successful integration of migrants and social cohesion seems to be becoming harder to come by, leading to a vicious circle where migrants, increasingly marginalised in host countries, can never be expected to become development actors if they are not provided with the opportunity to participate in public life and live at peace with nationals and so will always be seen as that group of people who don’t integrate, steal jobs and undeservedly receive government money.”*

Where do these negative perceptions come from? Is it all perception? How do we counter them? How do we really make a stance against xenophobia? And how do we ensure empowerment and social inclusion of migrants and diaspora into societies? These questions will be the focus of this Working Session, also taking into account the particular effect of these perceptions for migrant women and for children.

**2. PAST CIVIL SOCIETY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE “5-YEAR 8-POINT ACTION PLAN” AND GFMD**

The issue of xenophobia and social inclusions was not included in the 5-year 8-point plan as an individual point. The draft Global Movement Report, a report presenting progress on Civil Society’s 5-

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<sup>1</sup> This draft Action Paper has been prepared as input for the 2015 GFMD Civil Society Days by AFFORD with input from BASUG

year 8-point action plan<sup>2</sup>, based on interviews with key civil society actors and a survey completed by more than 330 civil society organisations across the world, and document review, maintain that ‘While there is general acceptance of the Plan of Action, a clearly identified omission is discrimination and xenophobia’. Discrimination and xenophobia not only represent a challenge to migrants and their families but also a challenge to civil society in advocating for policy change.

However, despite this omission, the theme has come up in many recommendations over the past year, for example civil society in last year’s GFMD called for: **Campaigns and monitoring mechanisms to end the use of abusive terminology and discourse against migrants in media and by politicians and policy makers.**

### 3. ACTIONS BY CIVIL SOCIETY

There have been numerous campaigns by civil society to lift up the images of migrants and diaspora as bearers of culture, diversity, development, and more. Below a few examples from Europe, and a global campaign. The working session will seek to identify many more actions and campaigns, and will try to assess whether they have had impact:

- Migrant Voice, UK <http://www.migrantvoice.org/>
- Movement against xenophobia, UK <http://www.noxenophobia.org/>
- ‘I am an immigrant’ Against xenophobia global campaign. This is a global campaign with visibility at country level. Countries and locations involved available here: <http://www.iamanimmigrant.net/>
- Migration Aid Group, Hungary <http://www.migrationaid.net/>
- Refugees Welcome, Germany <http://www.refugees-welcome.net/>

### 4. EXISTING PRACTICES AND TOOLS

The Working Session will look at various policy areas that can address the social inclusion of migrants, and combat xenophobia and negative perceptions. Some areas to explore are:

- Campaigns and public relations
- Anti-discriminatory / xenophobia legislation
- Cultural / community events
- Prosecution and legal actions
- School curriculum / awareness raising programmes
- Use of social media for immediate response, example facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/migrationaidhungary?fref=ts> (Migration Aid Group Hungary)

### 5. KEY SUGGESTED GOALS AND INDICATORS

The authors of this Action Paper suggest to work towards the following 4 goals and indicators, to be refined and added to during the Working Session:

#### 1. A more coordinated network of organisations challenging xenophobia

*Indicator: Established regional network, plus TOR.*

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.madenetwork.org/agenda-change>

**2. A more coordinated approach to sharing and learning about existing tools and practices to challenge / respond to xenophobia**

*Indicator: Accessible list of existing and new tools and practices*

**3. More collaboration with traditional and local host country institutions and organisations**

*Indicator: Database registrations. Increased involvement in webinars and other activities.*

**4. Strengthening collaboration with inter-faith organisations**

*Indicator: Database registrations. Increased involvement in webinars and other activities.*

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS STEPS FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION**

The Working Session will be defining actions to recommend to governments and for civil society to take forward. In line with the goals above, the authors of this Action paper in particular propose to work on these four actions:

1. Identify coordinators/convenors for global network / working group, and establish a global network or working group
2. Establish a web-based resource of new, existing and effective tools and practices
3. More anti-xenophobia legislation and prosecutions
4. Strengthening inter-cultural and international exchange for friendship

**7. GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION DURING THE SESSION**

1. What are the current issues and forms of xenophobia and negative perceptions prevalent in your country / region? In your analysis where do these perceptions come from? Is it all perception? Where/why do we counter them? What do governments need to do? And what do we need to do as civil society?
2. How has your organisation responded to the different economic, cultural and emotional questions around xenophobia? Could you provide concrete examples. And how does your government respond to xenophobia?
3. What kind of policies are needed to ensure the empowerment and social inclusion of migrants and diaspora into societies? Are there tools and practices that have worked better than others in your country or region?
4. How have you measured the successes of campaigns and interventions? What does success look like? What more can civil society do?