

IOM International Dialogue on Migration

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Panel on Migrants' Voices

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Introduction

- Role and purpose coordinating civil society, particularly migrant-led organized networks, in the Global Compact on Migration and beyond
- The membership, goals and vision of the Global Coalition on Migration
- Our vision in the Global Compact process- building organized migrant participation, building capacity and mobilization on the ground and in regions, addressing key priority issues within the compact
- What does this compact mean for us-migrant communities on the ground- setting the groundwork for the coming decades on human rights, labor rights, governance (whole of society and whole of government approach), xenophobia, social-economic-political inclusion

My Migrant Journey

- Intersections of identities and the 'danger of a single story'- migrant, woman, organizer, person of color
- My story as a migrant from Kolkata, India to Bronx, NY- rooted in changing migration and labor needs in the 1970's-1980's from Asia to North America
- Pushes for my family- economic opportunity, education in the U.S., limitations of our roles in life/work as women for my mother and her vision for me
- Pulls for my family- Labor needs of lower cost and more flexible labor with professional visas in engineering, science, etc (my father) and labor needs in US cities in service sector economies- retail work, care, taxi-driving/restaurant, construction (for my mother)
- What are migrants issues then, in the compact and in reality- not just the journey and experiences of migration itself, but our lives as community members, families, parents, workers, women in our local communities (in our workplaces, schools, hospitals, public spaces)
- Aspects of gender and migrant girls and womens' experiences for myself and my mother
- Aspect of xenophobia and racism
- Aspects of economic access and structural inequalities in the US (destination/host society)

Agency and Organizing as a Migrant

- My intentions to serve low-income communities in the Bronx/NY (migrants and non-migrants, mainly communities of color)- college and graduate education
- Why I founded a grassroots, migrant and women-led organization of migrant workers- DRUM-The South Asian Organizing Center; Who are South Asian low-wage and undocumented migrant workers in the U.S. and elsewhere and the ways I worked in the community- inside detention centers, fighting deportation of people and families, paths to regularization, ending criminalization policies, winning campaigns for firewalls in NYC, winning language programs in education and public services, establishing leadership programs in civic organizing for women and youth, winning labor protections at local and national levels

- The work of DRUM as a mass membership-based organization building leadership skills of new migrants to understand and engage civically in host societies on a range of issues and organizing campaigns- immigrant rights, equity and access in education, housing access, workers/labor rights campaigns, women's empowerment, youth organizing
- This engagement needs to happen of migrant communities with citizen communities across key current issues that builds mutual interest, solidarity and objectives to improve social conditions within host societies/local communities
- Why my focus was building the long-term leadership of low-income migrants, undocumented migrants, women and girls, and workers- integration means thinking long-term to build engagement of migrant communities within the social, economic and political pressing issues of our destination communities
- Focusing on migrant youth leadership and organizing is key (pipelines to community service, policy advocates, civic engagement)- shifting interests and priorities- where there are second and third generations settling; This tackles issues around economic, social, racial or political exclusion that generates lack of cohesion and ghettoization
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Personal Stories are Grounded in Public Policies

- Why my and migrant experiences are rooted in the policies that expand or limit opportunities, criminalize or uphold rights and dignity
- ***Migrants are facing a human rights crisis exacerbated by increasing policies of criminalization, deterrence and externalization of borders.*** The Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration must be the opportunity to center the rights and dignity of migrants rather than entrench this model. In order to do this, there must be bold leadership to reframe the debate so that practical measures and actionable commitments work to uphold and respect the human rights of migrants regardless of status rather than undermine them.
- While many share the understanding that human mobility is nothing new and that many of us have benefited from our own migration journeys, current policies fall far short of recognizing that migration will only increase in a globalized world. ***This is particularly true for the ways in which language and policies view low-wage or 'low-skilled' migrant workers and irregular migrants.*** While it is important to shift the narrative to a positive one about the contribution of migrants, we must go beyond the framework of 'harnessing' economic benefits from migrants when a fundamental and often unacknowledged driver in the current model is the demand for cheap and exploitable labor.
- It is precisely due to the lack of adequate regular and safe channels that migrants are pushed into dangerous journeys and irregular status.
- What deterrence and criminalization policies do succeed in is to render migrants even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Millions of low-wage and irregular migrant workers and their families- domestic and care workers, farmworkers, service and construction workers- live precarious lives and in fear- preventing them from raising their voices, joining trade unions or accessing basic public services.
- ***This criminalization of low-wage migrants by policies compounded with growing xenophobia and racial discrimination allows*** migrants to continue to be used as scapegoats by nationalist and populist agendas as a diversion from deeper economic, social and political transitions within many receiving societies.
- ***As in the current IDM session, it will be important that the Global Compact process elevate genuine migrant participation.*** This means that, civil society and particularly **migrant-led organizations**

ourselves must be engaged in a sustained and meaningful manner. Migrant organizations, should be involved as central actors from the phases of design, development, implementation and monitoring of the Global Compact. ***To this end, the Global Coalition on Migration and our civil society partners are actively mobilizing to ensure that the Global Compact respects and fulfills the human rights of all migrants with concrete goals, targets and indicators for accountability – and does so in a way that will bring real change to the lives of millions. Nothing about us without us.***