

What could we do in 12 years?

By Melissa Pitotti

Greetings from the future. October 9, 2030 to be exact.

Apologies if my signal gets cut. You see, I am not here in person. To avoid carbon emissions from business travel, we've been using virtual conferencing systems for these meetings.

The added benefit of this approach is that people from around the world can participate, despite not getting a visa or being short of travel funds. Migrants, diaspora groups, affected municipalities, local NGOs, journalists, trade union representatives, development banks, corporate sponsors, and others are now introducing themselves in writing in multiple languages (which are being simultaneously translated) to react to and complement my presentation.

How did we get here?

Do you remember 8 October 2018, when we attended the IOM-IDM? Participants sitting next to me were buzzing. Scientists had issued their "final call to save the world from 'climate catastrophe'." They gave us 12 years to do it. 12 years to make a system-wide transformation at a speed and scale that had no "documented historic precedent."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on "Global Warming of 1.5°C said many things that were relevant to our work we were developing on safe, orderly and regular migration.

Of climate change, it talked about:

D3.1 Increasing investment in physical and social infrastructure is a key enabling condition to enhance the resilience and the adaptive capacities of societies.

D.5.2 Barriers include the scale of adaptation financing, limited capacity and access to adaptation finance.

D7.2. Cooperation on strengthened accountable multilevel governance that includes non-state actors such as industry, civil society and scientific

institutions, coordinated sectoral and cross-sectoral policies at various governance levels, gender-sensitive policies, finance including innovative financing and cooperation on technology development and transfer can ensure participation, transparency, capacity building, and learning among different players.

So we took that that sense of urgency in 2018 - that need for investment, for overcoming barriers, for inclusive cooperation - and we applied it to our own work to meet the funding needs to have the capacity to support safe, orderly and regular migration.

We had already planned on a “capacity-building mechanism” in the UN supporting Member States to implement the Global Compact. This consisted of a “connection hub,” a “start-up fund” and an open-source “global knowledge platform.” We built on that plan and then some.

Sharing

We decided not to call it capacity “building,” or capacity “development,” or capacity “strengthening.” We called it: capacity sharing. This is because we recognized – particularly in conversations we were having on localization and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus - that each stakeholder had valuable experiences, and expertise, and capacities to offer. It was not “one way” learning that was needed, but “peer-to-peer” exchange on a massive scale. This nuance built ownership, because everyone was valued and could contribute. It built on support that already existing, for example in the OSCE and IGAD.

Institutional Strengthening

We noticed by reviewing the self-reports that Grand Bargain signatories hadn't yet fulfilled their 2016 commitment to:

Increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders, including preparedness, response and coordination capacities, especially in fragile contexts and where communities are vulnerable to armed conflicts, disasters, recurrent outbreaks and the effects of climate change. We should achieve this through collaboration with development partners and incorporate capacity strengthening in partnership agreements.

So we asked the Grand Bargain Eminent Person (and World Bank CEO) to help come up with collective approaches for sustained twinning. For immersive experiences. For simulations inculcated with a heavy emphasis on protection, human rights, international law and humanitarian principles.

We mapped the available capacities – taking an inventory if you like - matched them to those in need, connected them, and to supported massive cross-learning.

We invested in partners, including NGOs, who wanted to better run their organizations: through better strategic foresight (futures thinking) and planning, better financial and human resource management, more successful fundraising, more dedicated preparedness, etc.

For existing voluntary contributions, we fixed a percentage – for some it hovered around 2.5% - of all contributions to institutional strengthening.

Story Telling

Recalling the Secretary General’s Together Campaign, we invested in migrants telling their own stories to young children in schools, in movies and television and radio, in houses of faith and sports. We found that creating more opportunities for storytelling and connection chipped away at the toxic narrative and helped build political will.

Deepening and widening the resource base

This system-wide work was costed out and funded by a variety of contributors through a variety of accessible channels – a mix of bilateral contributions, pooled funds and other financing instruments.

How could we afford all this? There had been talk of a start-up fund. Of seed funding. Of voluntary financial contributions. No. This was not going to get us the scale and predictability we needed. We needed to deepen and widen the resource base.

To unlock new resources we decided, despite strong resistance, to push for solidarity levies to create a steady revenue stream for this work. On this we were inspired by the UNITAID micro-levy on airline tickets that raised 1.6

billion euros between 2006 and 2011 with the participation of just 10 countries.

We launched an inter-agency exchange improving financial literacy and building a practitioner community on topics like crowd funding and Islamic Social financing, etc.

Another campaign succeeded in achieving a reduction to less than 3 per cent for the transaction costs of migrant remittances. The campaign rewarded, with visibility, those money transfer agency who lowered commission rates and waived fees.

Measurements and Accountability

The accumulated benefits of all these initiatives were demonstrated as we edged towards 2030 in terms efficiencies, effectiveness, and quality.

As each year passed, we collected the data, the evidence, to show our investments were smart.

We checked in on the progress made during the 2022 and 2026 International Migration Review Fora.

Incentives

After my presentation concludes, we will be presenting awards.

You see, to reward good behavior creating to the public good, we decided to create **incentives** for those who SHARED capacity, who PLANNED ahead, who HELPED unlock new resources.

We joined prestigious companies and universities and celebrities to provide high profile financial awards to those good examples.

So I leave you now, from my future perch to ask you three questions I did not answer in my retrospective.

- 1) First, who does you think connected the dots? From climate change, to migration, to the SDGs. From UN reform to the New Way of Working to

the Grand Bargain? Who explained the resources available in simple terms, and provided support to the people in need?

- 2) Second, who do you think minded the gap? By this I mean the significant funding shortfall? A task made difficult by the competition for scarce resources and the challenging political climate?
- 3) Third, who do you think acted as the watch dog over these 12 years? Who raised the flag when efforts were being used to build walls and detention centers, rather than appropriate systems? To ensure that efforts to address migrants was done in dignity and in line with a rights-based approach. To safeguard the 3 Ps: protection, principles and partnership?

Enjoy the rest of the event. Signing off.