



Study of the Outcomes and Impacts of the Global Forum on Migration and Development and Civil Society Days

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A Study of the
Global Forum on Migration
and Development
and
Civil Society Days:

**UNDERSTANDING OUTCOMES, IMPACTS,
STRENGTHS AND GAPS IN THE GFMD AND CSD**

October, 2012

DISCLAIMER

This publication was produced at the request of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. It was prepared independently by Richard Blue, Danielle de García, and Kristine Johnston of Social Impact, Inc. The authors' views expressed in this publication are their own; and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Executive Summary

Evaluation Purpose and Methods

In November 2011, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and accompanying Civil Society Days (CSD) completed their fifth year of operation, with the aim of improving migration policy coherence and enhancing the benefits of migration to sending and receiving countries, and to migrants themselves. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the largest non-governmental donor to this process, commissioned this study to retrospectively assess the outcomes and impact of the CSD and GFMD on policies, practices, issue framing, and government-civil society cooperation; and to prospectively draw lessons learned for the future of the GFMD and CSD.

The evaluation took place from November 2011 through September 2012, allowing the team to observe the CSD and GFMD in Geneva, conduct an in-depth case study in Mexico, distribute online surveys to participants, conduct interviews at the UN offices in New York, and conduct key informant interviews by phone. Using a mixed method approach, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative key informant interviews and an extensive document review, the team has worked to triangulate data and strengthen the validity of findings.

This study is geared towards the main stakeholders of the GFMD and CSD, including governments, civil society representatives, and donors. It is hoped that the aforementioned stakeholders will be able to utilize the findings, conclusions, and recommendations within this report to better inform their work in migration and development moving forward – both within and outside of the GFMD and CSD processes.

CSD/GFMD Background

The issues of migration and development, migrant rights, and international migration have risen rapidly on the international policy agenda since the mid-1990s, but have lacked a coherent global institutional framework to guide work in the field. The GFMD as a formal mechanism emerged from the first UN General Assembly High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in 2006. It was decided that the GFMD would not have a decision-making mandate and would be linked to the UN, but would operate as a process outside of the UN system. As such, the GFMD emerged as a voluntary state-led process dedicated to informal, non-binding dialogue. A parallel demand for civil society involvement led to the development of the Civil Society Days, held directly prior to the states-led meeting, with contributions from private foundations, governments, and international organizations.

Conclusions

In the full version of this report, the following statements have been augmented by specific conclusions based on the findings for each of the questions investigated by the evaluation team. The findings supporting these general conclusions are presented in the body of this report.

Purpose of GFMD & CSD

Different expectations among and between civil society and government actors stem largely from the lack of a clearly articulated and generally accepted set of objectives, assumptions, and causal hierarchy for the Civil Society Days, which has caused a good deal of frustration on the part of government and civil society representatives.

Effects on Civil Society Capacity

Networking and knowledge building efforts among civil society actors have been largely successful within the CSD framework, while capacity building and access to government by CSOs have enjoyed a far lesser degree of success. Given the presence of additional processes and organizations which also provide networking and knowledge building to CSOs, some civil society actors question the value added by the CSD.

Effects on Civil Society/Government Relationships

Data regarding the impact of the CSD and GFMD on civil society and government collaboration are mixed. While there are specific examples of collaboration between civil society actors and member states resulting at least in part from participation in the forum, and more than 30% of surveyed participants believe the CSD/GFMD collaboration has been fairly or very impactful, nearly the same percentage believe there had been very little evidence of impact. This is predominantly due to the fact that the ability of the CSD and GFMD to contribute to collaboration depends largely on external factors, such as the political, economic, and social context within each member state.

External Impacts

Much of the ability of civil society to influence the agenda of the GFMD occurs during preparatory meetings, while their ability to influence the migration agenda occurs largely at the national level outside of the GFMD process. While most civil society representatives do not feel their issues are adequately incorporated into the states-led discussion, the perspective does seem to have improved in recent years.

A few distinct policies, projects, and policies are reported to have benefited from the CSD/GFMD. However, the ability of the meetings to produce finite policy and project outcomes is a source of both debate and frustration due to differing expectations regarding the goals of the CSD and GFMD.

CSD Structure and Institutional Dimensions

While 2011 marked a significant positive development in the institutional structure of the Civil Society Days, there remains considerable room for improvement. In particular, there is a need for enhanced sustainability, continuity, and dialogue between different actors (both through enhanced representation of different types of civil society representatives and increased dialogue between government, civil society, and private sector actors). The ideal structure of the CSD cannot be

specified however, as whatever structure is chosen will need to advance an identified theory of change for the process¹.

Recommendations

- Stakeholders should consider developing a clearly articulated program design and monitoring process grounded in a credible and validated theory of change. The result will be a more realistic program strategy and implementation process informed and adjusted by a robust and useful program monitoring system. The theory of change should be communicated to all participants and outside stakeholders to ensure that expectations are properly aligned, and that structural and thematic considerations feed into the desired objectives.
- The CSD should consider developing a strategy and program implementation process that supports some form of continuous interaction between CSOs and government, with investment in relevant organizational capacity, advocacy and negotiation skills for CSOs at the national level.
- In any future programs designed to bring widely diverse and varying interests, organizations and responsibilities together to promote a productive dialogue and positive change, it will be important to make sure that the right organizations and representatives are in the room.
- For any continuing program involving the promotion of migrant rights and/or development, develop and/or support two essential elements: 1) a structure by which dialogue can occur in both sending and receiving countries, and 2) a monitoring and information management process by which progress, and problems, can be identified and shared with a wider array of stakeholders in civil society and in governments.
- Consider supporting an international panel made up of CSO and lead government representatives to examine, with the support of the ICMC, the GFMD process and the content of this and other evaluation and research studies, to determine the specific objectives, most effective program design to achieve those objectives, and a sustainable source of financial support.

¹ A theory of change is an important component of the original program design process, by which the designers invest in an in-depth understanding of the problem to be resolved, and the specific outcomes and objectives to be achieved. Once objectives have been determined, which may be as simple as 'enhanced dialogue', the application of a theory of change specifies what actions, investments, organizational structures and processes need to be introduced to motivate and produce the desired results. Underlying assumptions are identified, if-then hypotheses are constructed, the positions and aspirations of various stakeholders are understood, and the constraints and/or threats to achievement of desired results are anticipated and countered.