



# Cities and regions localising the Global Migration and Refugee Compacts

A deep dive of the 2022 Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees submissions

June 2023

A working paper by the Mayors Mechanism

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## Introduction

In 2018, with the adoption of the [Marrakech Mayors Declaration](#), local and regional governments (LRGs) pledged to implement the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) (GCM) and the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) in unison, as concrete pathways to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

To elevate this continued political commitment, Mayors Mechanism partners — [United Cities and Local Governments](#) (UCLG), the [Mayors Migration Council](#) (MMC) and the [UN Migration Agency](#) (IOM) — in partnership with the [UN Refugee Agency](#) (UNHCR), launched a [Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees](#).

Acknowledged by the UN Secretary-General<sup>1</sup>, the Call to Local Action offers a concrete avenue for LRGs to localise the GCM and GCR and for LRGs to be recognized for meeting global goals.

Concretely, it aims to:

1. **Expand** the number of LRGs publicly endorsing the GCM and GCR through the Marrakech Mayors Declaration.
2. **Collect and showcase** bold, people-centred local actions that achieve or exceed the GCM and GCR to facilitate cross-fertilization, peer learning and replication.
3. **Create** a cohort of publicly recognized LRG leaders engaged in robust GCM and GCR implementation to motivate scaling, investment and new local-national-global partnerships.

In May 2022, the Call to Local Action mobilised [70 actions and pledges](#) ahead of the UN International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), the first-ever global review and pledging conference of the GCM. With this collective commitment to action, LRGs were the second largest stakeholder group – after national governments – to pledge to the implementation of the GCM.

This assessment takes a deep-dive into these actions, with the aim to learn and improve the future Call to Local Action process, as well as to formulate clear recommendations and take-aways for UN Member States and UN Agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> [UN Secretary-General Second Report on the Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, February 2022: para 16.](#)

## Type of local and regional governments

The below section provides a brief overview of the type of LRGs as well as the type of organisations that participated in the Call to Local Action in 2022.

Key observations:

- Out of the 70 actions, 59 were submitted by 44 LRGs. The remaining 11 actions were submitted by 4 LRG networks / partnerships, working at the sub-national (FAMSI) national (ANVITA) or international level (Mayors Mechanism and MMC-C40).
- The cities of Arua, Barranquilla, Bogotá, Boston, Lampedusa, Milan, Montréal, Nador and Zürich submitted more than 1 action.
- In total, the 70 actions cover a population of over **100 million people**.

Table 1: Overview of LRGs by May 2022 by country. GCM Champion Countries are indicated with an \*

Country	LRG	Country	LRG
Argentina	Esteban Echeverria	Mozambique	Beira
Bangladesh*	Dhaka north	Portugal*	Braga
Belgium	Mechelen	Sierra Leone	Freetown
Brazil	São Paulo	Somalia	Hargeisa
Burkina Faso	Dédougou	South Africa	eThekwini
Canada*	Montréal (3 actions)	South Africa	Johannesburg
Colombia*	Barranquilla (2 actions)	Spain	Barcelona
Colombia*	Bogotá (2 actions)	Spain	Fuenlabrada
Colombia*	Medellín	Switzerland	Zürich (3 actions)
Costa Rica*	Coto Brus	Mexico*	Mexico DF City
Costa Rica*	San José	Morocco*	Nador (2 actions)
Ecuador*	Quito	Togo	Haho
Ethiopia*	Addis Ababa	Tunisia	Sfax
Ethiopia*	Jijiga	Türkiye*	Gaziantep
France	Paris	Uganda	Arua (2 actions)
France	Strasbourg	Uganda	Entebbe
Ghana*	Accra	Uganda	Kampala
Italy	Lampedusa (2 actions)	Uganda	Koboko
Italy	Milan (3 actions)	United Kingdom	Bristol
Kenya*	Nairobi	Uruguay	Montevideo
Lebanon	Beirut	USA	Boston (5 actions)
Liberia	Monrovia	USA	San José

- The LRGs that joined are **diverse in size** and include 16 cities with a population of 1.5 million or over, such as Johannesburg (14 million), Dhaka North (11 million) and Mexico City (8.8 million) as well as 11 smaller localities with a population between 50.000 and 200.000.
- In terms of regional coverage, there is an **under-representation of Asian LRGs** with only Dhaka North participating from the region.
- **Lessons for the future:** More specific and targeted outreach to partners in Asia and the Pacific will be important for future Call to Local Action roll-out. Further outreach to smaller cities and towns (under 50.000 residents) could be another area to grow. Such diverse participation will also foster improved understanding of the differences between types of cities and their actions and capacities.

Figure 1: LRGs by size<sup>2</sup>

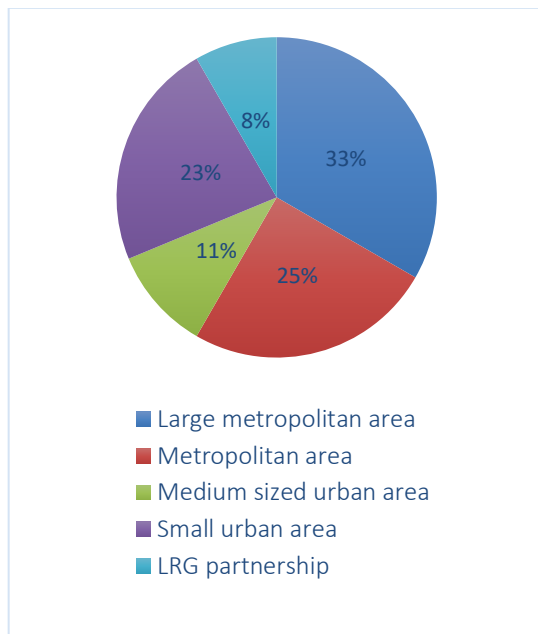
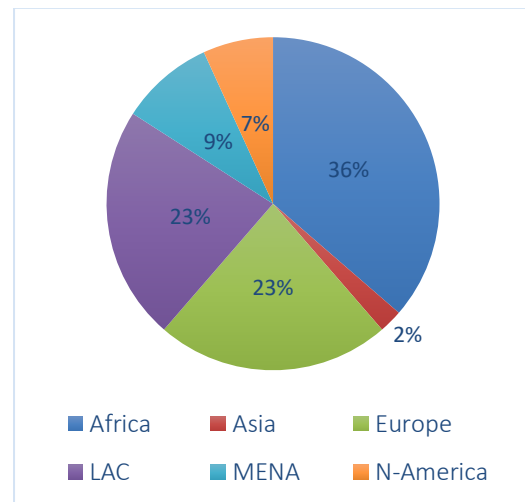


Figure 2: LRGs by region



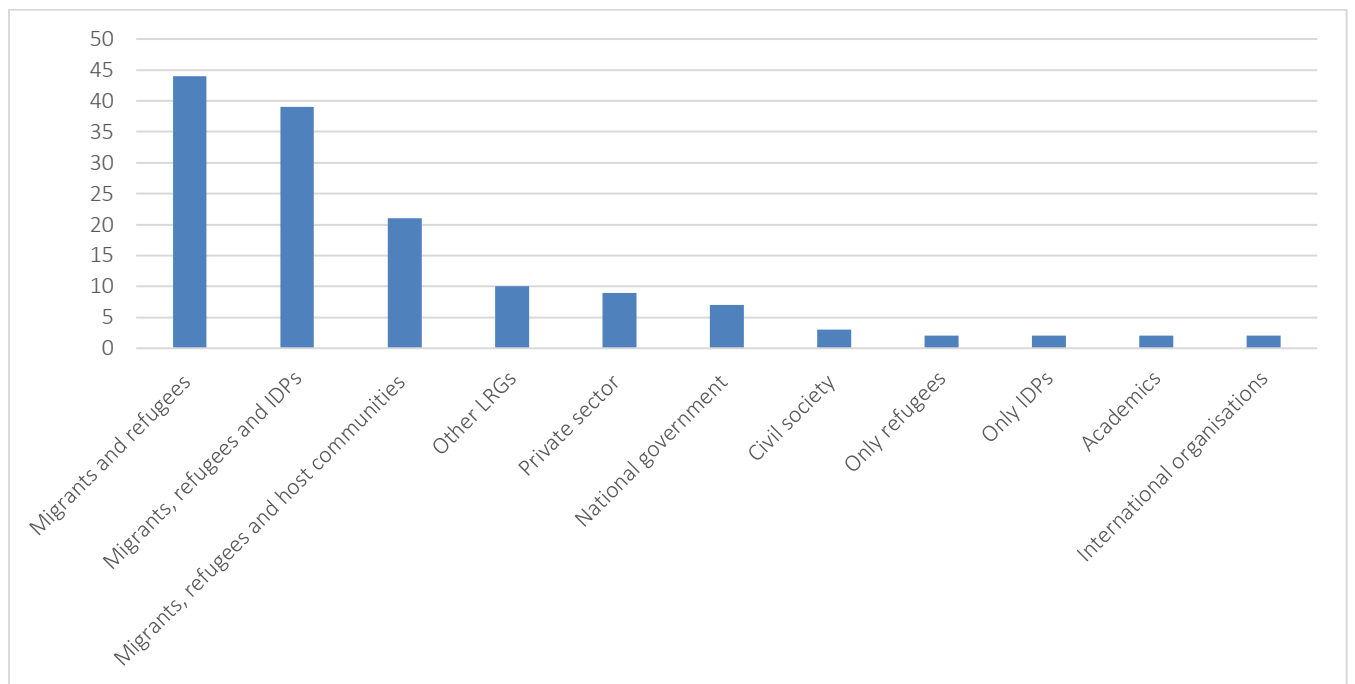
<sup>2</sup> This follows the [classification of 'city size'](#) proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

## Type of actions

This section provides a short overview of the type of actions LRGs submitted.

- **In unison:** Most actions target migrants, refugees and IDPs jointly. Rarely does an LRG action target just one population group: just two actions target only refugees, responding very concretely to the large arrivals of Ukrainian refugees (Braga and Zürich).
- **Community-wide impact:** In many cases the participating LRG indicates that programmes built for migrants and refugees will be accessible to all members of the local community.

Figure 3: Type of beneficiaries by frequency of reference in CTA submission



- **Ongoing action:** Of the 70 actions, 8 had concluded by the time of submission. All other actions were ongoing or starting in 2023.
- **Pilot projects to be scaled up:** Most LRGs indicated their action to be a project / programme (instead of a policy, campaign or advocacy strategy). Very often, LRGs indicate that the proposed action is a pilot, which will possibly be scaled and replaced at a later stage, pending its impact as well as availability of funding.

Figure 4: Timeframe of the actions

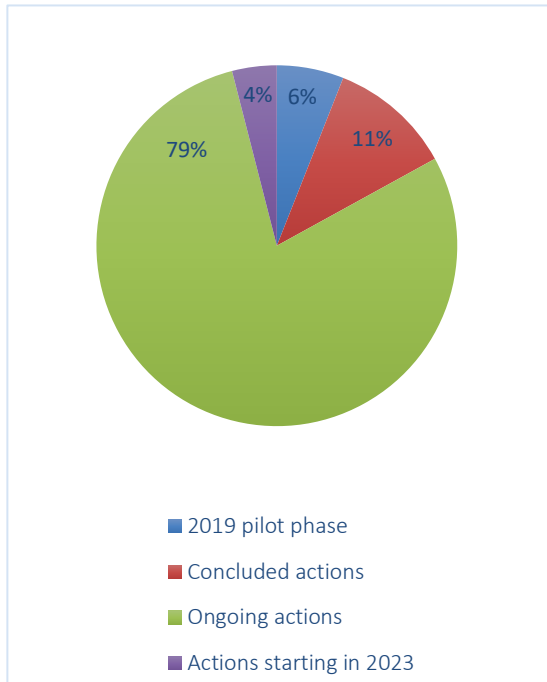
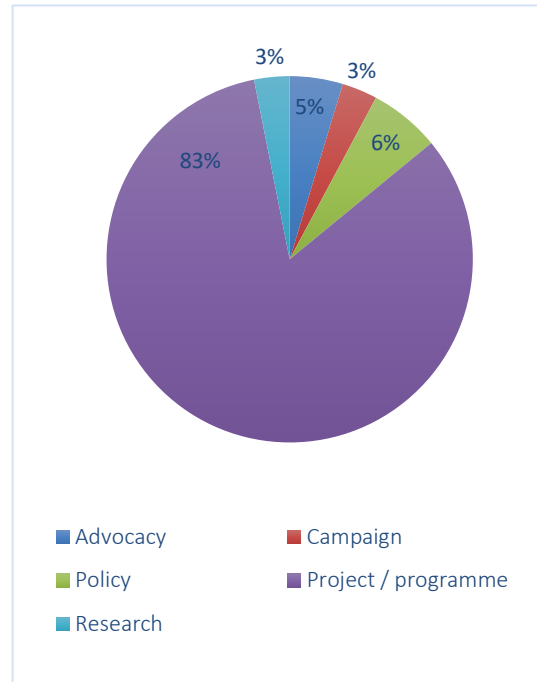
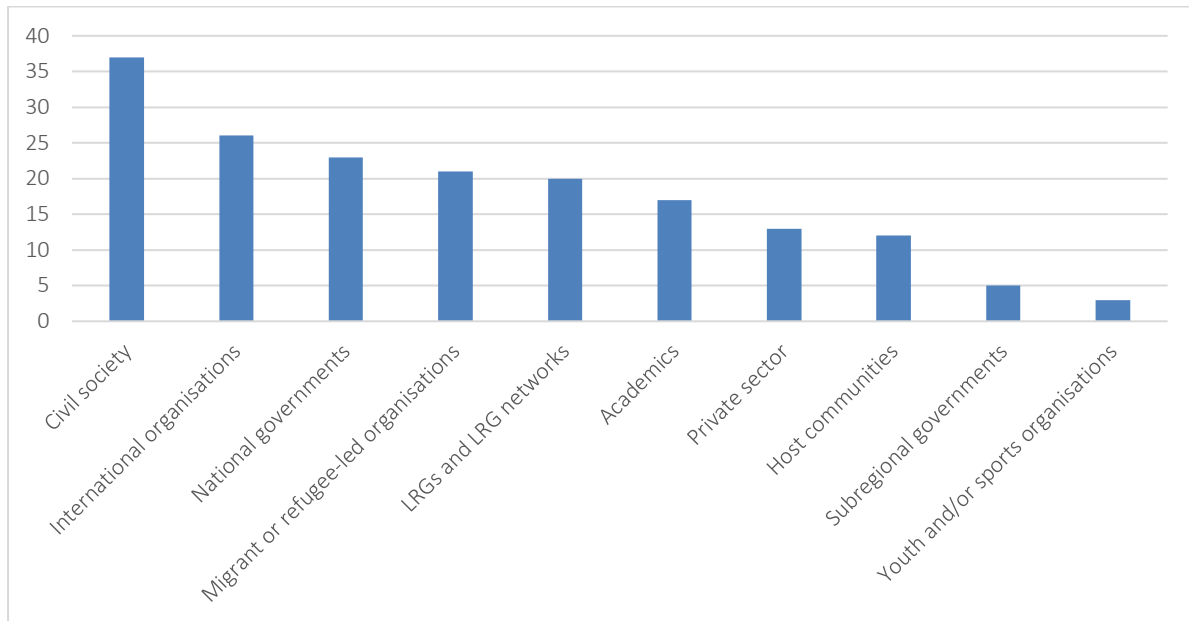


Figure 5: Type of actions



- **Localization triggering multi-level alliances:** Several LRGs indicate the national government to be a beneficiary of their programme. One local government mentions that ‘local efforts can create an impetus to create new alliances with global, national and community-based organisations as well as provide the testing ground and data for new normative frameworks at local level, which ultimately can inspire migration governance at national level’.
- **Multi-stakeholder approach:** All actions are implemented in partnership with others. Civil society is the partner most frequently mentioned, but others, such as UN Agencies and the private sector appear regularly.
- **Multi-level governance:** Almost half of the actions are implemented in partnership with either the national (21 actions) or subregional (5 actions) governments.
- **High-impact partnerships:** The actions submitted by LRG networks have partnerships very central to their approach and focus on supporting their membership with learning materials, opportunities for peer learning (FAMSI and Mayors Mechanism), fundraising for city-to city projects (FAMSI, ANVITA and C40-MMC), the set-up of communication campaigns (ANVITA) and advocacy activities.

Figure 6: Partners by frequency of reference in CTA submissions



### Sustainability, budget and impact

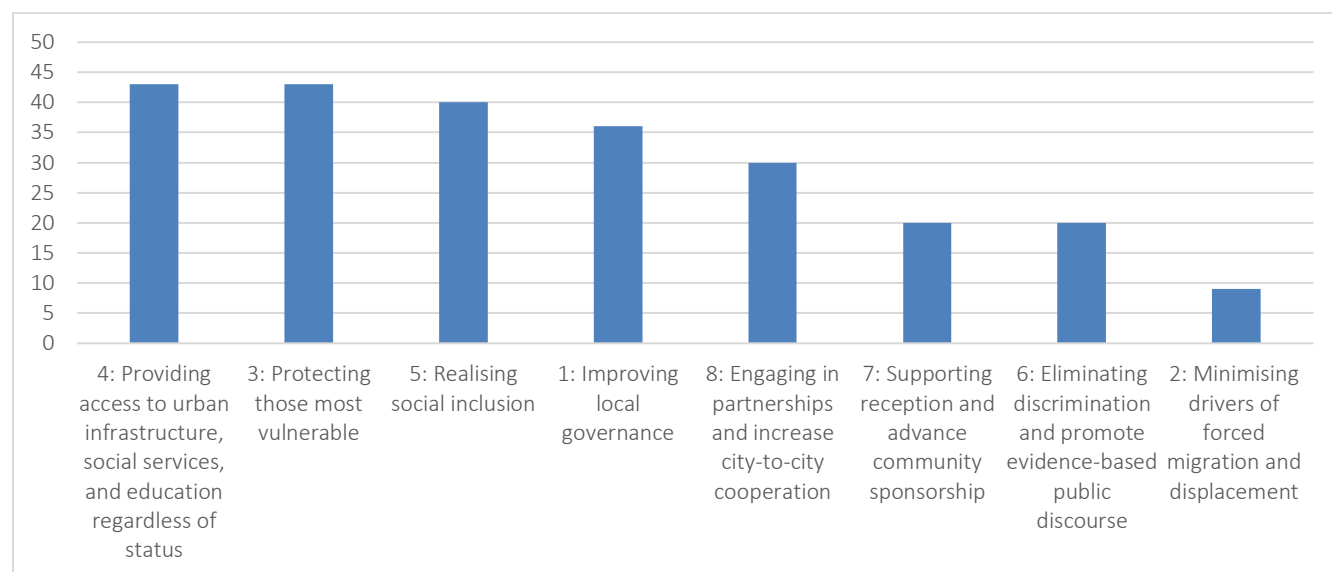
- Many actions submitted are pilot projects that would require further resources to continue.
- Budgets to implement the action go from less than 50,000 to 1 million USD per action.
- Many LRGs hope that their action will provide a testing case to spark improved policy coherence and coordination at local level.
- Access to disaggregated data at local level, as well as sufficient resources and capacity for impact evaluation remains a continued challenge when it comes to measuring success.



## Thematic deep dive

When submitting an action, LRGs indicate the priority area to which their action contributes. The 8 pre-identified priority areas come from the [Marrakech Mayors Declaration](#) and link back to specific objectives and focus areas of the GCM, GCR and the SDGs. The full matrix is available on the [Call to Local Action Website](#). Many LRGs indicated multiple priority areas per action.

Figure 7: Marrakesh Mayors Declaration thematic priority areas by frequency



### PRIORITY 1: Improving local migration and forced displacement governance - 37 commitments

- Many of the LRGs indicate that their action has a secondary goal to **improve local vertical and horizontal policy coherence** at local level.
- Some actions specifically pledge to create a **structure or policy** at local level that would improve policy coherence, such as:
  - Barcelona: Strategic plan and support structure for enhanced collaboration at local level.
  - Bogotá: Advisory Office for Migratory Affairs.
  - Bristol: Cross-city Taskforce on Migrant Inclusion.
  - Gaziantep: Migration Management Directorate.
  - Quito: District Human Mobility Plan.
  - São Paulo: Municipal plan for immigrant population.
  - San José, US: Strategic Plan: Welcoming San Jose 2.0.
- A number of cities focus on **mapping and data collection** (Accra, Arua, eThekweni, Haho, Sfax, San José, Costa Rica, Coto Brus, Nairobi, Paris), with the aim to better inform their design of local policies.

## PRIORITY 2: Minimising the drivers of forced migration and displacement – 12 commitments

- While local governments are faced with a multitude of drivers of forced displacement, including poverty and conflict, many of the submissions specifically indicated **climate change as a major driver** to be addressed with an action and pledge.
- 9 actions specifically aim to **build local resilience to climate change**, while at the same time ensuring that these local strategies are inclusive and create opportunities for migrants and refugees, for example by **creating green jobs** in those sectors that will be impacted by resilience strategies such as waste and recycling management (Addis Ababa, Freetown, Accra, Milan, Arua, FAMS), greening of land (Johannesburg, Jijiga) and the construction of more sustainable infrastructure (Milan).
- Cities such as Beira and Hargeisa provide support to migrants, refugees and IDPs that live in urban areas vulnerable to climate change, by helping **voluntarily relocate those vulnerable to climate change** to safer areas and providing them additional support for income generation.
- Actions from cities like Accra, Nairobi and Paris specifically aim to **better assess the impact of climate change on human mobility** in their city through data collection and research.

## PRIORITY 3: Protecting those most vulnerable – 51 commitments

- Actions that are tagged under Priority 3 also form an integral part of the actions that fall under Priority 4 (provision of access to services).
- The following cities have submitted **actions that attend specific needs of migrants in vulnerable situations**, such as:
  - Women migrants and their dependents: Bogotá, Dhaka North.
  - Children on the move: Braga, Milan, Montevideo, Nador, Dédougou, Mechelen, São Paulo, Accra, FAMS.
  - Victims of human trafficking: São Paulo.
- Others very specifically include migrants and refugees as a sub-group within their wider strategy to **prevent homelessness** by providing mobile registration centres (eThekweni), ensuring emergency shelter or temporary housing (Medellín, Mexico City, Milan, Montevideo) and giving financial support to cover rent and job creation (Johannesburg).

## PRIORITY 4: Providing access to urban infrastructure, social services and education regardless of status – 47 commitments

- There are several actions that explicitly set up a **‘one stop shop’** for migrants and refugees (Barcelona, Barranquilla, Bogotá and Montevideo), where they can access a wide range of services through one dedicated information centre. These actions are **explicitly non-discriminatory** and provide access to migrants and refugees regardless of status, including undocumented migrants.
- Cities such as São Paulo and Montréal already have the necessary infrastructure in place to ensure access to services regardless of status, but what is lacking is **training** of public institutions and employees to ensure cultural- and migrant- sensitive service delivery.
- Acknowledging that access to local services is a greater challenge for migrants without documentation, cities also facilitate the provision of necessary **documentation** to access available

services in the city (Montréal) or to receive dedicated **legal support** to further process their administrative case (Quito, Boston).

#### PRIORITY 5: Realising socio-economic inclusion – 46 commitments

- This section focuses on the empowerment of migrants and refugees to realize full inclusion in local labour markets (9 actions) as well as participate in local policy making (5 actions), with many of the actions showing overlapping with Priorities 3, 4 and 6, in particular when it comes to access to services and efforts to prevent discrimination.
- LRGs like Barranquilla, Bogotá, Boston, Bristol, Freetown and Montréal provide **job counselling and training** and work closely with the private sector to inform and raise awareness, as well as provide administrative support to companies to hire migrants and refugees.
- Others (Hargeisa, Jijiga, Milan) incentivise **migrant and refugee entrepreneurship** by providing either trainings and/or seed funding.
- Cities such as Freetown and Milan work together to **create pathways** for skills mobility between their residents, in close collaboration with universities.
- Some LRGs specifically create structures for **migrants to engage in local decision making** (Koboko, São Paulo, Quito) as well as **empower (young) migrants** to become leaders and advocates (Boston, Mechelen).

#### PRIORITY 6: Eliminating all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse – 25 commitments

- Some LRGs tick this priority without necessary implementing dedicated communication activities, as they rightly see providing access to services regardless of status (Priority 4), protecting those most vulnerable (Priority 3) and realising social inclusion (Priority 5), as **important strategies to prevent discrimination**.
- Of this group, 6 LRGs submitted actions that specifically promote evidence-based public discourse and combat xenophobia through **dedicated information campaigns** to welcome newcomers (Montréal, São Paulo, Bristol, ANVITA), through working closely with schools (Nador), cultural centres (Lampedusa) and journalists / the media (Nador, Lampedusa).

#### PRIORITY 7: Supporting reception and advance community sponsorship initiatives – 22 commitments

- A number of actions specifically respond to the sudden **increase of arrivals** of migrants, refugees or IDPs (Boston, Barcelona, Beira, Braga, Fuenlabrada, Milan, Zürich, FAMSÍ) and support reception in several ways, such as providing multi-lingual information, setting up volunteer support services, engaging city-to-city peer learning to improve capacities.
- This priority has a strong overlap with those actions that aim to set up a '**one stop shop**' for arriving migrants and refugees with regards to access to services (see Priority 4).

#### PRIORITY 8: Engaging in regional and multilateral partnerships and increase city-to-city cooperation – 31 commitments.

- Many of the actions submitted have a specific component to **share learning with other cities**, either through peer learning and practices, or through working together for joint advocacy and

action. This is particularly strong for the LRG partnership submissions (FAMSI, ANVITA, C40-MMC, Mayors Mechanism).

- The City of Zürich also specifically pledged to provide **financial assistance** to local civil society partners in countries neighbouring Ukraine, hereby engaging in direct regional partnerships to improve migrant and refugee protection.
- These examples show that cities and their associations are important sources of financial and capacity building resources.

### What about the whole-of-government principle?

- 17 LRGs explicitly reported they have **not been invited by their national government** or regional organization to join GCM/GCR implementation or review discussions. Only three LRGs mentioned they have been consulted: Barranquilla and Mechelen (on GCM implementation) and Zürich (on GCR implementation).
- Of the participating LRGs, **13 LRGs are based in 12 GCM Champion Countries**. Since GCM Champion Countries play a key role in demonstrating how to implement the GCM in line with all its guiding principles, the CTA provides a concrete opportunity to advance improved partnerships between local-national governments.
- There are **potential synergies between GCM and GCR pledges** from local governments with those from the countries they are located in. These synergies may offer concrete entry points to seek further alignment of GCM and GCR implementation, follow-up and review efforts across all levels of government – hereby bringing the whole-of-government principle to life. UNHCR’s pledge matching process could help achieve this for the GCR.
- Lastly, many local actions aim to streamline service provision at local level and entail increased coordination between different local, sub-national and national government departments and almost half of the local actions are implemented in partnership with either the national or sub regional government. This showcases how local governments themselves bring the **‘whole-of-government principle’ to life**.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper shows the key role of LRGs in spearheading concrete GCM and GCR implementation. Not only are LRGs principal providers of services to newcomers but they also spearhead principled action to address longer-term inclusion needs. Working closely with LRGs offers enormous potential: LRGs hold the key to unlock the whole-of-government and whole-of-society principles and many commitments in the GCM and GCR, as well as those adopted in the [2022 IMRF Progress Declaration](#), will not materialise without LRG action and leadership.

This assessment also shows that much remains to be done and the recommendations from the [2022 Call to Local Action Report](#) still stand today:

#### To national governments and their regional organizations:

- **Empower** LRGs with adequate mandates and resources to implement local policies in accordance with national policy frameworks and commitments to global goals.
- **Consult** LRGs as in the design, implementation and evaluation of migration and forced displacement policies, GCM and GCR national voluntary reviews and national pledges to the GCM and GCR.
- **Partner** with LRGs, invite them to join national delegations to formal review processes, including towards the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF), 2024 GCM Regional Reviews and 2026 second International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).
- **Design** the upcoming GRF and IMRF modalities for participation so that they allow for LRG registration in their own capacity as distinct from national government, civil society and other stakeholders. This is in line with the Secretary-General's 'Our Common Agenda', where he calls for more systemic engagement of LRGs in international processes as an avenue to build a stronger, more inclusive multilateral system. The efforts of LRGs to develop local implementation plans and local reviews can be highlighted in the IMRF and GRF, similar to the HLPF process.

#### To the UN System:

- **Recognize** the mandate and commitment of LRGs to contribute to the implementation of the GCM and GCR and offer concrete avenues to partner, consult and invest in LRGs in UN activities, including for example, in the planned update of UNHCR's Urban Policy.
- **Create** meaningful pathways to engage LRGs in GCM and GCR review and implementation mechanisms in a transparent and coordinated manner, such as the GFMD has established with the Mayors Mechanism.
- **Partner** meaningfully with LRGs via UN Country Teams, as crucial partners to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.
- **Encourage** national governments to meet the whole-of-government principle by creating specific vertical coordination mechanisms with LRGs on migration and forced displacement.
- **Include** LRGs as partners or recipients of UN Migration Network and UNHCR-led funds, such as the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, the Refugee Environmental Protection Fund or other migration and forced displacement response funds.

#### To humanitarian and development actors and donors:

- **Create or invest** in financing mechanisms for migrant and refugee inclusion that LRGs can directly access, like the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees.

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