

# A Tool to Implement the Global Compact for Migration:

## Ten Key Steps for Building Global Skill Partnerships

*Michael A. Clemens and Kate Gough*

The world needs better ways to manage international migration for this century. Those better ways finally have a roadmap: the Global Compact for Migration. Now begins the journey. National governments must lead in order to implement that Compact, and they need tools. One promising tool is Global Skill Partnerships. This brief explains what Global Skill Partnerships are and how to build them, based on related experiences around the world.

### WHAT IS A GLOBAL SKILL PARTNERSHIP?

A Global Skill Partnership (GSP) is a bilateral agreement to take control of migration. It is designed to channel migration pressures into tangible, mutual benefits for both a country of migrant origin and a country of migrant destination. It maximizes the benefits of migration and shares them fairly.

A GSP is an exchange between equal partners. The country of destination agrees to provide technology and finance to train potential migrants with targeted skills in the country of origin, *prior to migration*, and gets migrants with precisely the skills they need in order to integrate and contribute best upon arrival. The country of origin agrees to provide that training and gets support for the training of non-migrants too—*increasing* rather than draining human capital at the origin.

Three traits distinguish a GSP from other, related policies around migration and skills. First, a GSP is a tool to

manage future migration pressure. It is explicitly a way to address many legitimate concerns about migration, in destination countries (such as integration and fiscal impact) and in origin countries (such as skill drain). Second, a GSP directly involves destination-country employers to create specific skills they immediately need that can be learned relatively quickly. It is a public-private partnership for semi-skilled work, jobs that take between several months and three years to learn, not a university degree. And it creates those skills *before migration*, with cost savings to the destination country and spillover benefits for origin-country training centers. Third, a GSP bundles training for migrants with training for non-migrants in the origin country, according to the differing needs of each. GSP training occurs in two tracks: a “home” track for non-migrants, and an “away” track for migrants.

### WHY NOW?

Demographic pressures for migration are colossal and will continue. Emblematic of these forces are historic demographic imbalances across the Mediterranean: the labor force of sub-Saharan Africa will rise by *800 million additional workers* by the year 2050, just as much of the European labor force is declining. In addition to more traditional tools of migration enforcement and development assistance, the world urgently needs new policy tools to manage migration better for everyone involved. GSPs offer one of countless needed innova-

tions. With better tools, demographic change can become an opportunity.

The Global Compact identifies GSPs by name as a way to implement its Objective 18 on skill investment. The Compact identifies few other specific new policy tools. GSPs also implement the Global Compact's Objective 5 on enhancing the availability and flexibility of lawful migration pathways. For that purpose, GSPs have been recommended by the UN Secretary-General.<sup>1</sup>

## THE GLOBAL SKILL PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL BUILDS ON TESTED MODELS

The Global Skill Partnership model is new, but it builds on many related models that have been tested around the world. A particularly innovative cluster of these policy tools has been built by the German development agency, GIZ. GIZ has created a number of bilateral agreements with developing countries to prepare potential migrants—before they leave—to arrive and quickly make a positive contribution to Germany in mid-skill occupations. There have been nurses from Vietnam, hospital workers from Morocco, construction workers from Kosovo, and many others.

These agreements primarily include labor mobility for the traditional apprenticeship or vocational training programs in Germany, with a varying degree of training happening before migration. GIZ works with German and origin-country ministries, private sector employers, and state-level governments to facilitate all steps in recruitment, selection and placement, language and skills training, migration, and life in Germany. Collectively, these innovations have redefined what “migration policy” can be: not simply unilateral gatekeeping, but bilateral management of a process end-to-end for mutual benefit.

The GIZ agreements are flexible and highly contextualized, with varying degrees of circularity and different memoranda of understanding with partner countries. This specificity and context-specific tailoring is one of the more important lessons other countries can take away. A Global Skill Partnership can be tailored to the needs and wants of the destination and origin country, and can and will look different from partnership to partnership.

One of these programs, which prepares potential construction workers in Kosovo for potential work in Germany, offers critical lessons for the potential expansion of this model into a tool to manage migration pressure—that is, a GSP. The Kosovo government, facing youth unemployment around 30 percent, is now shifting resources towards vocational skills in a process that will require investment in capacity. It has been acquiring that investment in partnership with GIZ and others, not to stop migration but by leveraging the potential of migration.

For example, one private training institution specializes in nursing and trains Kosovars in two tracks—one to work in Kosovo after three years of training to meet technical nursing needs, and one to migrate to Germany for contracts with hospitals and other health centers to fill labor market needs there. The latter cohort receives training over the three years tailored to German market needs and coupled with German language training. A different training institution is focusing on mechatronics and other construction-related skills to meet Kosovo labor market needs and train participants to the standards of the German labor market.

These private institutions are financed by private donors, tuition fees (often paid for by the employer or future prospective employer), Kosovar or destination-country private sector employers or associations, or donor government development agencies—at little or no cost to Kosovar students. The result transforms migration into a tool to strengthen Kosovo's training capacity for its own needs, while destination countries get migrants with immediately needed skills.

## TEN STEPS TO BUILD A GLOBAL SKILL PARTNERSHIP

What needs to happen to implement a successful Global Skill Partnership pilot? Here we identify 10 core lessons for designing, implementing, and achieving the necessary stakeholder buy-in for a Global Skill Partnership based on related experiences in Germany and elsewhere.

### Building Coalitions

**1. Global Skill Partnerships are a development tool and a migration management tool.** GSPs require

<sup>1</sup> UN Secretary-General, “Making Migration Work for All,” A/72/643, page 7-20. <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/SGReport>

partners, and the way that the idea is presented to those partners is crucial. A Global Skill Partnership is not a tool to “facilitate migration.” It is a new tool to address the concerns that many have about migration, a *complement* to more traditional unilateral policy tools that restrict migration. It recognizes that the old tools of restriction and selection are not sufficient to meet the challenges of this century: restriction is only partially effective, and unilateral selection of migrants does not yield the job skills and cultural knowledge that destination countries prefer. And migrant origin countries face challenges in unilaterally regulating skilled migration in a way that clearly and directly benefits them. GSPs are a way for countries to get more of what they want from migration, and less of what they do not want, working together.

- 2. Global Skill Partnerships save money.** Investing in training institutions carries costs in the origin country. But ultimately, the training and operational costs are a fraction of what they are in the destination country. Many destination countries desire workers with skills, and those skills must be formed somewhere. They are often dramatically less expensive to form in the origin country. An up-front investment paves the way for a far more cost-effective, sustainable, and likely self-financing endeavor in the long run.
- 3. Training in the “home” and “away” tracks should match the needs of the partners.** The dual-track approach of the Global Skill Partnership model allows for one cohort or institution to be established within the same sector, but with participants training in different specialties across tracks. For example, “home” track nurses might specialize in family practice while “away” track nurses might acquire specialized skills in dementia care as well as language skills.

### Critical Partnerships

- 4. Build relationships within and between governments.** Constructive working relationships with the partner country are essential. While a number of ministries are relevant and could be involved, there should be at least one “champion” ministry willing and able to take this forward. Core partners might include ministries of labor, immigration, education, development, health (if nursing; or another professional sector), and/or foreign affairs. And within

governments, cooperation and coordination among ministries is equally essential. The international connections of a development agency often catalyze agreements of this kind. But that agency often needs counterparts in ministries of foreign affairs, labor, immigration, or interior, and sometimes ministries of education and trade as well. This requires formal structures.

- 5. Work directly with employers and labor groups from the start.** General skill training is often insufficient to meet employers’ specific needs. Employers must be directly involved in training and placement to ensure that the curriculum is apt and that integration of migrants into the workforce is immediate. This could include discussions between the destination and origin country, and the private sector, around minimum salaries, provisions for housing/food, and appropriate dispute mechanisms. And key unions or employees’ associations must be directly involved to ensure that the partnership complements their goals of maintaining high standards for workers.
- 6. Utilize local partners and existing institutions in the country of origin.** GSPs work best when based in, and strengthening, existing training institutions in the country of origin. These can be public or private. Implementing agencies can explore professional exchanges with skilled workers in the destination country to facilitate capacity building in the origin country institutions. Large multinational corporations (employers) may also have an existing presence in origin countries, and could support investments in local institutions or may even have their own training presence.

### Structuring the Training

- 7. Address human capital challenges among trainers early on.** Either a lack of qualified trainers, or a lack of funding to attract and retain the most qualified trainers, can be some of the greatest constraints to getting a skills partnership up and running. Implementing agencies could utilize professional exchanges to bring destination country technical skills to the origin country training centers/trainers. Another solution can be professional exchanges with previous/current participants on short-term rotational bases once the programs are up and running.

8. **Use the dual-track system as a tool to address specific labor market participation constraints in the country of origin.** Identify the needs or barriers in the origin country market, such as high youth unemployment or lack of female training participation. For example, the Global Skill Partnership model could address low participation rates among women in origin countries. The home track can be designed to engage women and train them in skills most useful to their employment prospects, and could prepare women for future migration opportunities as cultural shifts take root and enable more gender-equitable migration opportunities.
9. **Any needed language training should be advanced: both conversational and technical.** Migrant workers will need to speak with customers, clients, patients, and colleagues. Conversational language abilities will be important not only to professional success but also to integration upon arrival (even if the migration is not permanent), and, naturally, technical fluency for their trade will be crucial. Of course, GSPs can also be preferentially built between origin and destination countries with existing shared languages, but experience shows that they need not be.

### Once Migrants Arrive

10. **Administrative and integration support prior to and immediately upon arrival is important.** Integration of migrants is a challenge. GSPs are designed as tools to ensure that integration is as rapid and complete as possible. Direct connection to an employer, professional colleagues, income, and tax contributions from the day of arrival are the very best terms

on which migration can happen, and that migration is certainly going to happen. For example, GIZ supports the visa application process, and in some cases works with the consulates in the states of origin to facilitate visa interviews for a cohort. Immediately upon arrival, GIZ teams greet migrants and support them in setting up a bank account and registering with the necessary foreign offices. Longer-term integration support can include engaging the existing diaspora. Cooperation with colleagues in foreign affairs and immigration is essential to ensure that visas are accessible and enforced.

## TAKING GLOBAL SKILL PARTNERSHIPS FORWARD IN TODAY'S POLITICAL CLIMATE

New lawful migration pathways are unpopular. They are unpopular because of what migration is now. Implementing the Global Compact for Migration therefore requires something other than creating “more” lawful pathways for migration. It requires creating new kinds of migration that bring visible, tangible benefits to everyone affected. Its focus is *how* migration happens, not *how much*.

The Global Skill Partnership model is a way to *change what migration is*. People who see migrants as those who burden public services and lower native wages react differently to migrants than people who see migrants as necessary, productive members of society. With proper design, GSPs offer governments a new tool alongside the old, unilateral tools to reduce migration. At first, investing in GSPs will involve some costs. Continued reliance on the old tools will prove much more costly.



[WWW.CGDEV.ORG](http://WWW.CGDEV.ORG)

This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 license.

**MICHAEL A. CLEMENS** is the co-director of Migration, Displacement, and Humanitarian Policy and a senior fellow at the Center for Global Development.

**KATE GOUGH** is a research associate for the Migration, Displacement, and Humanitarian Policy program at the Center for Global Development.

### CONTACT:

Kate Gough, Research Associate, [kgough@cgdev.org](mailto:kgough@cgdev.org)