



USA Pre-Global Refugee Forum Meeting - 28 Oct 2019

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

BACKGROUND

In the lead up to the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) on 17-18 December 2019, UNHCR facilitated 10 regional multi-stakeholder consultations around the globe¹ to explore the role of relevant actors, including NGOs and civil society in advancing the ‘whole-of-society’ approach espoused by the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The consultations provided an opportunity for multi-stakeholder partners to exchange on possible pledges and contributions--beyond Geneva--at the regional, national and local levels.

The United States Pre-GRF regional consultation, jointly held by InterAction and UNHCR, engaged NGOs in a discussion with donor, host country, financial institutions, and UN agency stakeholders to reflect on: 1) the gaps, challenges and opportunities for financing and planning for refugee-hosting countries, with a focus on the role that NGOs should play in the implementation of the Compact, 2) what meaningful NGO pledges could look like, and 3) how NGOs could leverage the new data on GCR pledges and indicators in advocacy efforts going forward.

The following is a summary of the main points that were raised and discussed during the consultation, as well as major points of consensus.

GAPS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Financing and Planning for Refugee-hosting Countries

There are many obstacles to responding with a ‘whole of society’ approach to refugees and host communities in need, particularly in situations of fragility and protracted crises. Among the challenges discussed, participants identified the existing donor funding structure as a key barrier to more linked-up assistance between humanitarian and development actors. In particular, a lack of quality funding (i.e. flexible and multi-year funding) and lack of funding for local actors impedes long-term, multi-stakeholder approaches to refugee crises.

¹ The other regional multi-stakeholder consultations took place in Nairobi, Amman, Bangkok, Johannesburg, Istanbul, West Africa, Brussels, Addis Ababa, and Rio.

Another key challenge is a lack of coordination and complementarity among actors, including humanitarian, development, private sector, government, and local stakeholders. Refugee and host community voices also need to be better integrated into response planning and programming in a meaningful way.

Lastly, participants discussed data as critical to assessing needs and financing gaps and the lack of it as a barrier preventing effective exchanges among stakeholders.

Considering these gaps and challenges, participants proposed several changes that are required to meet the “whole of society” vision espoused in the GCR:

1. **Donors need to provide more multi-year and flexible funding.** This should include local partner funding and better program alignment between humanitarian and developing resources.
2. **Further cohesion across sectors and stakeholders.** Governments, the private sector, and humanitarian and development actors should clearly define what the humanitarian/development “nexus” is and what it looks like in real terms of planning and programming. Stakeholders should consider how the nexus lens can be applied to every pledge made at the GRF.
3. **Increased leadership by host governments.** Host governments can be key barriers or enablers to a comprehensive refugee response. Government leadership at the regional, national and local levels should be strengthened to enable an environment that involves a wider reach of better coordinated actors in the response to both refugee and host community needs. At the same time, actors must maintain humanitarian principles.
4. **Refugees should be part of decision-making processes.** NGOs and UN agencies should build opportunities for refugee participation in planning and programming processes and support refugee leadership within their organizations. Donors and multilateral banks should play an advocacy role with governments and include ways for a wide range of actors, including refugees, to participate in national response planning.
5. **Data gaps should be bridged.** The newly established UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Center (JDC) has the potential to address data gaps and inform policies to support better refugee responses. Existing data institutions should be linked to local institutions, with a view to build local technical capacity in data collection and use in their refugee response.

Participants also discussed **the role that NGOs should play** to support the GCR’s ‘whole-of-society’ approach and distilled them into the following key areas:

1. Look for ways to bridge humanitarian and development work in the NGO community and within our own dual-mandate organizations.
2. Build the voices of refugees and host communities into planning, programming, and advocacy.
3. Identify and scale up good practices for strengthening local partner capacity to improve their ability to respond to long-term needs.

Pledges

Past pledging conferences have demonstrated that pledge-makers often fall short of fulfilling their commitments due to lack of accountability, insufficient planning for implementation, and a dearth of resources, among other factors. These lessons learned were discussed by participants and subsequently captured in a [Checklist for Meaningful, Relevant, and Effective Global Refugee Forum Pledges](#) document intended to be used by all stakeholders as a supplement to the [UNHCR Guidance on Pledges and Contributions](#).

Leveraging Data for Advocacy

Data is critical to assessing need, identifying gaps in interventions, and advocating for financial and policy commitments that support durable solutions for refugees. The availability of quality data is essential for advocates to determine a clear picture on responsibility sharing for refugees and inform and engage donors and host governments. Yet a historical challenge in past pledging conferences has been the lack of public data on progress made by member states toward their pledges.

When advocating to donors and other stakeholders, publicly available data is key to identifying the level of funding committed and how it was spent, number of resettlement slots provided and number of “alternative pathways” created for refugees. NGOs are hopeful that the pledging data emerging from GRF will be publicly accessible, transparent and trackable—which will provide opportunities to assess progress, recognize remaining gaps, and hold stakeholders accountable.

At the national level, refugee-hosting government polices often have the most direct impact on refugees’ daily lives and NGOs play a critical role in holding them accountable to upholding the human rights of refugees. Thus, more direct engagement with local NGOs and advocates is also needed to better understand progress made on the ground and where gaps remain. Local NGO and advocate voices should be at the forefront, even more so as we operate in environments with closing civil society space.