

## **With Refugees: Inclusive Implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees**

CICG, Room IV, Tuesday 25 June 2019, 13:30-15:00

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Mohammed Badran (moderator), Representative, Global Refugee-led Network**

The moderator noted the need to ensure the meaningful participation of refugees in the GRF. He highlighted key reasons for engaging refugees as their knowledge and experience, and their unique perspectives: refugees are an essential component of the solution and allow us to identify disconnects between policies and realities.

The Global Refugee-led Network and refugees announced their pledge on behalf of refugees coming from 6 different regions: *“To meaningfully engage refugees in the process and decisions that effects them. Their participation will strengthen the contributions and network.”* This pledge reflects the goodwill of refugees and is an effort to inspire the audience and galvanize the participation at the Forum.

### **SUMMARY NOTES**

#### **H.E. Mr. Zeneke Kebede Korcho, Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office at Geneva**

The panelist noted that it is imperative to contextualise the holistic approach of the GCR that marks a departure from previous approaches. It is also important ensure better protection and peaceful co-existence of refugees and host communities and to advance positive narratives about refugees.

Ethiopia that has been hosting refugees for more than 40 years. Before the nine pledges made by Ethiopia at the 2016 Leaders’ Summit, refugee participation was limited to camp leadership. However, the pledges led to several shifts including: access to documentation (birth, death and marriage), expansion out of camp policies, access to education, health and work among others. Progress was made through the inclusion of refugees in the national system benefiting both the host community and the refugees. Refugees are no longer a separated population.

The GCR has certainly led to a multi-sectorial approach but a number of growing challenges remain in implementing the GCR in an inclusive manner. Government’s face challenges in planning for and including refugee populations due to existing resources constraints. With a climate of decreasing development, financing and humanitarian aid, limited opportunities to resettle refugees, and more unaccompanied/separated and uneducated children, there is a need to find a solution-based response through the GCR agenda. Both financial commitments and a long-term engagement is needed to ensure comprehensive solutions.

Ethiopia strongly supports refugee participation in the GRF, and is convinced that, with the support of UNHCR and other partners, they will be able to include refugees in their delegation.

**Ms. Annemieke Tsike-Sossah, Refugee Liaison, Ikea Foundation**

The panelist noted that the IKEA project in Ethiopia is now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year. Initially, this project started with an investment on social services and infrastructure to help build stability in the region. Quickly the conversation turned into: what can Ikea Foundation do in the camp to support refugees and the host-communities to be self-reliant? This involved working with UNHCR and with other partners in the region to see how improve crop production without increasing the pressure in the environment by using green methods.

Success is based on smart agriculture innovation, based on engagement with the local private sector and renewable economies. The Ikea Foundation engages directly with refugees to identify relevant skills and for a long-term investment (e.g. cleaner cooker solution).

Ikea understands that investing in refugees is investing in creativity. Human talent is our biggest asset. Ikea Canada launched refugee employment program in June 2019 and the company would like to open more job opportunities in Europe and North America for refugees.

The panelist stressed that refugees are engaged in all the programs with the principle of 50/50 (host-communities and refugees). This directly contributes to social cohesion. Additionally, their partners help them understand the needs of the refugees and host-communities that they support which is essential since they are a small team, with no field presence. Ikea Foundation has clearly invested in a process that allows them to engage closely with refugees and respond to their needs and capacities.

**Ms. H.E. Ms. Nathalie Olijslager, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations Office at Geneva**

The panelist emphasized the importance of listening to refugees and letting them contribute to discussions on their needs. She shared her experience with UNHCR in Uganda, where she met with refugee elders who highlighted the need to speed bumps to ensure the safety of children walking to school along a major highway. She emphasized that the community knows their needs best, and small investments can have a big impact. She outlined the need to involve refugees in the design and implementation of projects, and encouraged all participants to sign up for the Global Refugee-led Network pledge.

**Ms. Foni Joyce, Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC)**

The panelist noted that the Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC) has been involved in the initial process of the GCR. She provided several practical examples of meaningful participations including: creating a space where refugees can take the lead in driving change; implementing inclusive policies and partnerships that take into consideration where age, gender and diversity; engaging refugees in efforts to address root causes and to focus on informing refugees; and ensuring proper and transparent information dissemination to refugee populations. The panelist concluded by underlining the importance of letting refugees lead efforts to find solutions.

## Mr. Daniel Endres, Director, Global Refugee Forum

The panelist noted that when the consultations for the Global Compact started, a significant effort was made to include refugees. Refugees helped to shape the compact in a powerful way. Every actor needs to have modalities in place to ensure the inclusion of refugees in all levels of decision making. The panelist several challenges we continue to face, which include: restrictive **legal frameworks creating** conditions that constrain refugees' capacities to contribute to their host communities; **employability with many educated refugees unable to access work and livelihoods**; and lack of access to **education, which is** key to enable refugees to empower themselves. For example, the global average for tertiary education is of 37 percent whereas for refugees it is 1%. Investing in education for refugees is a priority. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of ensuring that preparations for the GRF are strongly grounded at the country level and reflect the needs and aspirations of refugees in a meaningful manner.

## Questions from the floor

Panellists and the audience discussed the need to consider:

- Strategies that UNHCR and other partners can adopt to support local initiatives taken by refugees (which are more sustainable, effective and reliable)
- The percentage of women and girls included in the 1% of refugees in tertiary education and opportunities to increase participation, particularly in contexts where refugee camps no longer provide free education (in the context of inclusion into national education systems).
- The need for the private sector to ensure that employment opportunities and commitments are impactful and that refugees have the opportunity to access leadership positions
- The importance of understanding that refugees often do not want to be categorized as "refugees" and of responding to the barriers that they face in accessing work e.g. language, culture, education etc.
- The need to understand local labour markets when supporting access to work, as well as the importance of understanding existing skills and finding new partnership modalities that can support broader investment and impact in the area of jobs and livelihoods.
- The need to broaden the participation of refugees in global and regional forums so as to ensure meaningful representation, including from the developing world. Opportunities provided by technology e.g. VCT connections were highlighted and it was noted that there is "no excuse to not talk to refugees".