

# THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES

## UNHCR QUICK GUIDE



*Burundian refugees and members of the local Rwandan host community study alongside one another at the Paysannat School in eastern Rwanda. © UNHCR / Hannah Maule-ffinch*

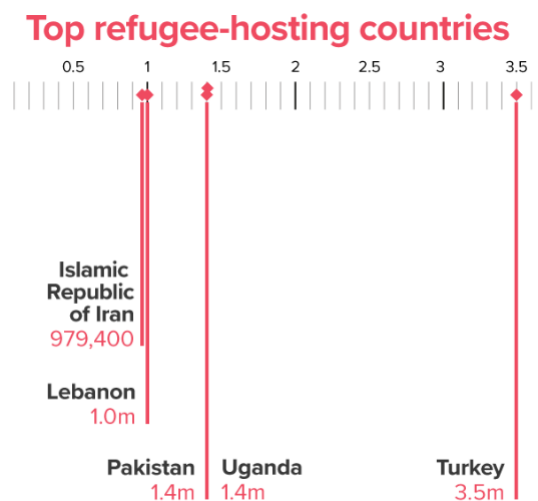
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## What is the global compact on refugees? Why do we need it?

At the end of 2017, there were nearly **25.4 million refugees** around the world,<sup>1</sup> more than half of whom are under the age of 18. What is more, the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting such large numbers of refugees continues to fall disproportionately on a relatively small number of countries. Today, just ten countries host 60% of the world's refugees. Turkey alone hosts **3.5 million refugees**, more than any other country. In Lebanon, **one in every six people** is a refugee; in Jordan, it is one in fourteen. Furthermore, the vast majority of the world's refugees (**85 per cent**) live in developing countries that face their own economic and development challenges.

A number of other countries make considerable financial or other contributions to refugees, including through unprecedented levels of humanitarian funding and by accepting refugees for resettlement. Their numbers are also limited, however: ten countries provide more than ninety per cent of UNHCR's budget, for example, and more than two-thirds of UNHCR's resettlement submissions go to just five countries. Despite the generosity of these States, the gap between the needs of refugees and action to meet them is large and growing.



With the adoption of the **New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants** in September 2016,<sup>2</sup> the Member States of the United Nations made a range of commitments to enhance the manner in which the international community addresses issues of human mobility. In relation to refugees, this included two key steps towards a more sustainable system for providing refugee protection and responding to the needs of host countries and communities:

- First, Member States adopted the **comprehensive refugee response framework**, or '**CRRF**', which builds on decades of experience in protecting refugees, supporting host countries and communities, as well as finding solutions.<sup>3</sup> It sets out a wide range of measures to be taken by the international community in response to a large-scale refugee situation across the whole cycle of displacement, from admission and reception to meeting ongoing needs and searching for solutions.
- Secondly, Member States agreed to continue to improve international responses by working towards the adoption of a '**global compact on refugees**' in 2018. To this end, they asked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to consult with Member States and a wide range of other stakeholders and propose such a compact.<sup>4</sup> The **proposed global compact on refugees**, of which the CRRF is an integral part, was released on 20 July 2018.

Less than two years since the adoption of the CRRF, **noteworthy progress** can already be observed, including:

- improved support for countries and communities hosting large number of refugees, including through \$2bn of dedicated development support from the World Bank and more than \$1bn of support from bilateral development donors to countries particularly affected by refugee displacement;

<sup>1</sup> Including Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the New York Declaration, see [www.unhcr.org/newyorkdeclaration](http://www.unhcr.org/newyorkdeclaration)

<sup>3</sup> See [www.unhcr.org/crrf](http://www.unhcr.org/crrf)

<sup>4</sup> These include international organizations within and outside the United Nations system, development actors and international financial institutions, regional organizations, civil society (including faith-based organizations; academics and other experts), the private sector, host community members and refugees themselves.



*Rohingya refugees enter Bangladesh in October 2017. © UNHCR / Roger Arnold*

- new initiatives to expand and safeguard refugees' access to education, livelihoods, and national justice systems; and
- redoubled efforts for solutions, including through an expanding pool of resettlement countries, the growth of private and community sponsorship schemes, and an increased focus on conditions in countries of origin that would enable return in safety and dignity.

Further information on this progress is contained in *From commitment to action: Highlights of progress towards comprehensive refugee responses since the adoption of the New York Declaration*.

## How was the global compact on refugees developed?

As requested by the United Nations General Assembly, the global compact has been developed through an extensive multilateral process of consultation with Member States and other key stakeholders. This process has included:

- The **practical application of the CRRF** in more than a dozen countries, and at the regional level in two situations, alongside a process of collecting good practices and lessons learned from a wide range of refugee situations—past and present—where the CRRF's principles inform policies and programmes. A key element of this process was UNHCR's **Annual Consultations with NGOs** in 2017, which was dedicated to the application of the CRRF and the development of the global compact on refugees;<sup>5</sup>
- A series of five **thematic discussions** on key topics to be addressed by the global compact on refugees in the second half of 2017, involving the participation of States, international and regional organizations, NGOs, academics, experts, private sector partners, refugees (including UNHCR's Global Youth Advisory Council), and host community representatives;<sup>6</sup>
- The **High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges** in December 2017, which was used to take stock of progress made and lessons learned in the course of the practical application of the CRRF and the thematic discussions;<sup>7</sup>
- An iterative process of **six formal consultations** with United Nations Member States on successive drafts of the global compact from February to July 2018, between which the text was revised in accordance with the feedback received;<sup>8</sup> and

<sup>5</sup> See [www.unhcr.org/crrf](http://www.unhcr.org/crrf)

<sup>6</sup> For more information, including documentation and video recordings, see [www.unhcr.org/thematicdiscussions](http://www.unhcr.org/thematicdiscussions)

<sup>7</sup> See [www.unhcr.org/hc-dialogue2017](http://www.unhcr.org/hc-dialogue2017)

<sup>8</sup> See [www.unhcr.org/formalconsultations](http://www.unhcr.org/formalconsultations)





*The 2017 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges was used to take stock of progress made in the development of the global compact on refugees, ahead of the release of the 'zero draft' in January 2018. © UNHCR / Jean Marc Ferré*

- The submission of almost **five hundred publicly-available written contributions** by a wide range of stakeholders.<sup>9</sup>

Based on this process, UNHCR released the **proposed global compact on refugees** on 20 July 2018. The text seeks to be practical and implementable, to balance various—and sometimes diverging—views, and to build on the areas of convergence.

In addition to this process, the Member States of the United Nations have also been working towards the development of a separate '**global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration**'. This compact, which also traces its origins to the New York Declaration, has been developed through an intergovernmental process under the co-facilitation of the Permanent Representatives of Mexico and Switzerland to the United Nations in New York. It will be adopted at an intergovernmental conference in Morocco in December 2018.<sup>10</sup>

## How will the global compact on refugees work?

The global compact on refugees establishes the architecture for a stronger, more predictable and more equitable international response to large refugee situations. Although not legally binding, it guides the international community as a whole in supporting refugees and countries and communities hosting large numbers—including for extended periods of time—through the mobilization of political will, a broadening of the base of support, and the activation of arrangements for more equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

There are a number of key features of the approach that the global compact on refugees embodies.

First and foremost, it will seek out ways to provide **greater support to hosting countries and communities** in a manner that supports refugee protection and the search for durable solutions; this support will include additional financial resources, but will also encompass political support, technical assistance, capacity-building activities, preferential trade arrangements, expanded access to resettlement and other third-country solutions, and efforts to address root causes and establish conditions in countries of origin that enable refugees to return home in safety and dignity.

<sup>9</sup> See [www.unhcr.org/writtencontributions](http://www.unhcr.org/writtencontributions)

<sup>10</sup> For further information, see [refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact](http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact)



An important part of this support relates to **the nexus between humanitarian and development action**; that is, the global compact on refugees will seek to enhance humanitarian responses, while also providing a basis for the early activation of development cooperation to provide additional support with direct benefits for host communities and refugees.

Second, the global compact will **engage a wider range of States and other partners** that are ready to respond to large refugee situations, both new and protracted. It will embrace a ‘multi-stakeholder’ approach, under national leadership, by strengthening existing partnerships and developing new ones. Partnerships between States, international and regional organizations, NGOs, and the academic community will continue to be very important, but there is also great potential for partnerships with international financial institutions, the private sector, and many others.

Third, the global compact on refugees will seek to foster the **resilience and self-reliance** of refugees—in a manner that also benefits host communities—by facilitating access to livelihood opportunities and national systems and services, backed up by appropriate support from the international community. For refugees, this will mean that they are less dependent on aid, are better equipped to return home when conditions allow and, in the meantime, can contribute to the communities that are hosting them. For those communities, this will mean that their own development does not suffer because of the generosity that they have shown to those in need.

Finally, the global compact will seek to ensure that refugee responses are **rights-based and integrate gender, age, and diversity considerations** throughout. A key part of this is ensuring that refugee responses actively and meaningfully engage those that they are intended to protect and assist, that they promote gender equality and empower women and girls, and that they combat discrimination.

The global compact on refugees is not intended to create additional burdens or impositions on countries hosting large numbers of refugees, nor to modify UNHCR’s protection and solutions mandate. It seeks to build upon the international refugee regime that has been established over decades—and that continues to save lives every day—by more equitably and predictably sharing burdens and responsibilities.



*Carmen, a Colombian refugee, lives and runs her own shoemaking business in Ecuador.*  
© UNHCR / Andres Loor

## What is in the global compact on refugees? What's new?

The global compact is divided into four parts:<sup>11</sup>

- I. An **introduction** that sets out the background to the compact, its guiding principles and its objectives, and that addresses the crucial issue of prevention and root causes;
- II. The **comprehensive refugee response framework**, as adopted by UN Member States in the New York Declaration;
- III. A **programme of action** that supports the operationalization of comprehensive responses by setting out measures that States and other relevant stakeholders can take to better share responsibility and cooperate more effectively in response to large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations; and
- IV. A section on **follow-up and review**, including with regard to the development of indicators, stocktaking of progress, and reporting.

The global compact has the same four objectives as the CRRF, namely:

1. to **ease pressures** on countries that host large numbers of refugees;
2. to enhance **refugee self-reliance**;
3. to expand **access to third-country solutions** (i.e. resettlement and complementary pathways for admission); and
4. to support **conditions in countries of origin** that enable refugees to return in safety and dignity.

The programme of action is divided into two sections: the '**arrangements for burden- and responsibility-sharing**' and the '**areas in need of support**'. Whilst the CRRF expressly relates to large refugee situations, the programme of action recognizes that other situations—such as when refugees move alongside other people on the move or IDPs, or when forced displacement results from sudden-onset natural disasters and environmental degradation—also pose complex challenges for the States affected and may also require the support of the international community.

### 'Arrangements for burden- and responsibility-sharing'

The global compact sets out a range of measures to promote international cooperation to support refugees and their hosts—as well as countries of origin where appropriate—and to redouble the search for solutions.

**At the global level**, the compact establishes a **Global Refugee Forum**, at ministerial level, that brings the international community together every four years (commencing in 2019) to focus on the challenges that refugees and host countries face, to broaden the range of actors that are engaged and providing support, and to review the collective progress that is being made towards more predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

The Forum will promote the sustained engagement of the international community as a whole on refugee issues and will establish a framework for further action by providing Member States and other relevant stakeholders with the opportunity to make concrete pledges towards implementation of the global compact on refugees, and to discuss opportunities, challenges and ways in which burden- and responsibility-sharing can be further enhanced. In ensuring the participation of refugees in a ministerial-level international event, the Global Refugee Forum will also break new ground in the engagement of affected populations.

Pledges will be sought from a wide range of States and other potential contributors. They could include:

- financial, material and technical assistance;
- resettlement places and complementary pathways for admission to third countries; and

<sup>11</sup> The proposed compact is available at [www.unhcr.org/formalconsultations](http://www.unhcr.org/formalconsultations)

- other actions that States have elected to take at the national level in support of the objectives of the global compact.

From 2023, the Forum will also play an important **accountability** function. In addition to providing for the making of new pledges, it will allow States to take stock of the implementation of previous pledges and other progress towards the achievement of the objectives of the global compact, and to review the ongoing efficacy of the arrangements for burden- and responsibility-sharing. Crucial to this accountability will be a mechanism for **tracking the implementation of pledges and contributions** that will be established in consultation with Member States and other relevant stakeholders, as well as a process to **measure the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees**. Stocktaking will be informed by **indicators** that will be developed to assess progress, and facilitated by a high level officials' meeting at the two-year interval between Forums to conduct 'mid-term review'.

**In specific large-scale refugee contexts**—whether new or protracted—the global compact on refugees provides that a host State or country of origin, where appropriate, particularly in need of wide-ranging support to respond to a large-scale refugee situation could request the activation by UNHCR of a **Support Platform** to assist its national response arrangements and the implementation of a nationally-led comprehensive plan.

A Support Platform would bring together a group of States to galvanize political commitment, mobilize assistance for comprehensive responses, and facilitate the early engagement of development actors (alongside humanitarian efforts). It would draw upon relevant pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum, and could initiate the organization of a solidarity conference to broaden the base of support beyond the States participating in the Support Platform.

Other stakeholders would be invited to engage as appropriate, including regional and sub-regional organizations and fora, international and regional financial institutions, relevant United Nations agencies, the private sector, and civil society representatives.

In addition, these arrangements would be supported by a number of **tools for burden- and responsibility-sharing** that aim to:

- ensure timely, predictable, adequate and sustainable **funding**, and the **effective and efficient use of resources**;
- embed the **multi-stakeholder and partnership approach** as the standard response method; and
- enhance the availability of reliable, comparable and timely **data and evidence**.

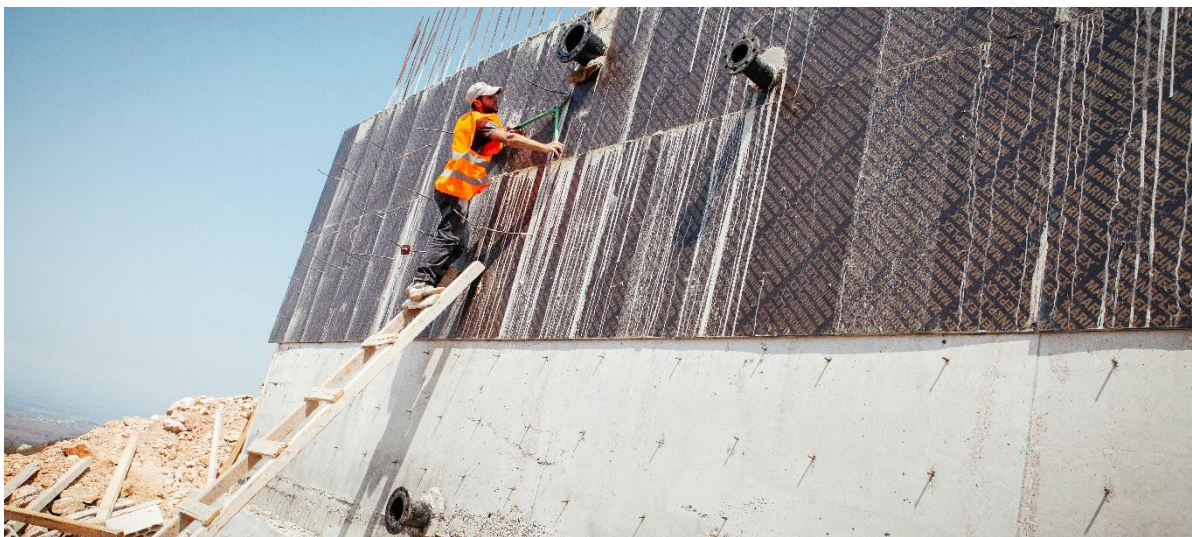
## 'Areas in need of support'

Based on past comprehensive responses and the application of the CRRF, the second section of the programme of action—'areas in need of support'—highlights where the international community may usefully channel support for a comprehensive, coherent, predictable and people-centred response to large refugee situations that is adapted to the specific context and in line with national strategies and policies. They encompass the full cycle of displacement and address issues, including preparedness and early warning, reception arrangements (including for those with specific needs), safety and security, measures to support refugees and host communities in everyday life (in areas including education, livelihoods and health), and measures to facilitate access to solutions (including voluntary repatriation, resettlement and complementary pathways for admission, local integration and other local solutions). In particular, this section proposes:

- the establishment of an **Asylum Capacity Support Group**, composed of experts from around the world, to provide support to national authorities to strengthen aspects of their asylum systems with a view to ensuring fairness, efficiency, adaptability and integrity;<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> A non-paper on the Asylum Capacity Support Group is available at [www.unhcr.org/formalconsultations](http://www.unhcr.org/formalconsultations)





*A new water reservoir for Syrian refugees and host communities is under construction in Machha, Lebanon. The project, which is supported by the European Union, has provided livelihood opportunities for close to 200 Lebanese and Syrian workers. © UNHCR / Martin Dudek*

- the deployment of resources and expertise to **support and strengthen national systems** in a manner that would facilitate access by refugees in a range of sectors, including education, livelihoods, and health; and
- the development of a **three-year strategy** to expand access to resettlement and to increase the availability and predictability of complementary pathways for admission to third countries.

## Where to from here?

The New York Declaration envisages that the General Assembly will consider the global compact proposed by the High Commissioner 'in conjunction with its annual resolution on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees'. This resolution is usually adopted each December.

The global compact represents a unique opportunity to strengthen the international response to large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations. However, its success will depend on the willingness of the international community to support its implementation. The finalization of the text thus represents not the end, but rather the beginning, of an effort by the international community to work towards collective outcomes with a shared sense of direction, purpose and accountability. It is a working tool—forged in an environment of cooperative multilateralism—that contains the building blocks for further progress towards more equitable and predictable sharing of burdens and responsibilities into the future.