

The Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact on Refugees

Working together to ensure that refugees and host communities are not left behind

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) is an essential tool for international solidarity in ensuring that refugees and the countries and communities that host large numbers of them are not left behind. The GCR was developed through an inclusive multilateral and multi-stakeholder process and affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018. It explicitly links forced displacement with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provides support for efforts to ensure refugees are included in work towards achieving the SDGs.¹

This document sets out the ways in which the SDGs and the GCR are aligned. These complementary frameworks can together ensure that displaced and stateless persons are not left behind in development processes and that displacement is addressed through inclusive and comprehensive approaches. The commitment of “leaving no one behind” explicitly includes refugees, thanks to a new indicator on refugees approved by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2020.

Although the GCR is not legally binding, it does ‘represent the political will and ambition of the international community as a whole for strengthened cooperation and solidarity with refugees and affected host countries’.² It provides a solid basis for advocacy for:

- Work by host States, donors, UN partners, and others to include refugees and host communities in their work to implement Agenda 2030 and achieve the SDGs: ‘States and other development actors will work to step up their engagement in support of refugees, host countries and host communities, and to include the impact of a refugee situation on host countries and communities in their planning and policies’;³
- Work with countries of origin to establish conditions for voluntary repatriation;⁴
- Collaboration between humanitarian and development actors ‘from the outset of a refugee situation and in protracted situations’ in support of host countries and (where appropriate) countries of origin;⁵
- The engagement of the United Nations system, which was already deeply engaged in the process of developing the GCR. The United Nations system is fully leveraged to support Agenda 2030 and the GCR. This includes the contributions of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSD) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), as well as all relevant agencies, to ensure operational cooperation to further national development action in support of host communities and refugees⁶, in particular through the [UN common pledge](#) made by the UN Secretary-General at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019.

¹ See, in particular, paragraphs 1 (‘Refugees and host communities should not be left behind’),

² Global Compact on Refugees, paragraph 4.

³ Global Compact on Refugees, paragraph 32. See also paragraph 65 (‘development actors will work in a complementary manner to humanitarian assistance interventions to ensure that the impact of a large refugee situation in a host country is taken into account in the planning and implementation of development programmes and policies with direct benefits for both host communities and refugees. A spirit of partnership, the primacy of country leadership and ownership, and the mobilization of predictable international responses consistent with national development strategies and aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, are key to ensuring sustainability. At the same time, host countries need to be able to rely on additional development resources to ensure that communities affected by a refugee situation are not impaired in making progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.’).

⁴ Global Compact on Refugees, paragraph 32.

⁵ Global Compact on Refugees, paragraph 35.

⁶ Global Compact on Refugees, paragraph 36.

Goal	Contribution made by the Global Compact on Refugees	Relevant SDG Targets	Relevant GCR paragraphs ⁷
Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	Refugees often live in socioeconomically depressed areas, making poverty part of daily life for them and their host communities. The Global Compact on Refugees seeks to improve socioeconomic outcomes for refugees and their hosts, including through the provision of timely, predictable, adequate and sustainable international support to:	1.3	81
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build the resilience of refugees and their hosts, including relation to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters 	1.4	89
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expand and strengthen social protection systems; and 	1.5	23, 64, 67
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitate socioeconomic reintegration when refugees are able to return home, and ensure that housing, land and property issues are addressed. 	1.a	32
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	The Global Compact on Refugees provides for States and other relevant partners to ‘contribute resources and expertise to facilitate access by refugees and host communities to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, and promote increased self-reliance in food security and nutrition, including by women, children, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons...Support will also be provided to build resilience of households and food and agricultural production systems in refugee-hosting areas, including by promoting purchases from local farmers and addressing bottlenecks along the food value chain’.	2.1	80, 81
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	The Global Compact on Refugees seeks to mobilize ‘resources and expertise to expand and enhance the quality of national health systems to facilitate access by refugees and host communities...Depending on the context, this could include resources and expertise to build and equip health facilities or strengthen services, including through capacity development and training opportunities for refugees and members of host communities who are or could be engaged as health care workers’.	3.7	CRRF 5(c)
		3.8	72, 73
		3.c	73

⁷ As provided for in paragraph 10 of the Global Compact on Refugees, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework—adopted by the General Assembly as Annex I of the [New York Declaration](#)—‘constitutes an integral part’ of the Global Compact on Refugees. As such, relevant references to the paragraphs of the Framework are noted here with the acronym ‘CRRF’.

Goal	Contribution made by the Global Compact on Refugees	Relevant SDG Targets	Relevant GCR paragraphs ⁷
Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	<p>The Global Compact on Refugees seeks to mobilize ‘resources and expertise to expand and enhance the quality and inclusiveness of national education systems to facilitate access by refugee and host community children (both boys and girls), adolescents and youth to primary, secondary and tertiary education’. In particular, ‘additional support could be contributed to expand educational facilities (including for early childhood development, and technical or vocational training) and teaching capacities (including support for, as appropriate, refugees and members of host communities who are or could be engaged as teachers, in line with national laws and policies). Additional areas for support include efforts to meet the specific education needs of refugees (including through “safe schools” and innovative methods such as online education) and overcome obstacles to their enrolment and attendance, including through flexible certified learning programmes, especially for girls, as well persons with disabilities and psychosocial trauma’.</p> <p>The Global Compact also provides for the provision of scholarships to refugees, including those that form part of a third-country solution.</p>	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.a	68, 69, 71, 99
		4.b	43, 95
		4.c	69
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	<p>Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is central to the Global Compact on Refugees, which provides for the adoption and implementation of ‘policies and programmes to empower women and girls in refugee and host communities, and to promote full enjoyment of their human rights, as well as equality of access to services and opportunities’ and the ‘meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls’. It seeks to address gender discrimination, promote women’s leadership, provide access to sexual and reproductive health, and ‘end all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation and abuse, and harmful practices’.</p>	5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.6, 5.c	9, 13, 34, 40, 44, 46, 51, 54, 57, 58, 59, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 80, 82, 83, 84, 89, 92, 94, 95, 99, 106 CRRF 5(a), 5(b), 5(e), 7(c), 12(d), 12(e), 13(c), 15
Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	<p>The Global Compact on Refugees seeks to mobilize resources and expertise to provide refugees with access to adequate safe drinking water and sanitation. In particular, it provides for States and others to work together to bolster national capacity to address water, sanitation and hygiene challenges in or near refugee-hosting areas (both rural and urban).</p>	6.1, 6.2	79 CRRF 5(c)

Goal	Contribution made by the Global Compact on Refugees	Relevant SDG Targets	Relevant GCR paragraphs ⁷
Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	<p>Given that access to energy is often a major problem in refugee-hosting areas and that coping strategies (such as deforestation for firewood) can have significant environmental impacts, the Global Compact on Refugees seeks to promote access to clean and renewable energy for refugees and host communities.</p>	7.1, 7.2	32, 79
Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	<p>With a view to fostering inclusive economic growth in refugee-hosting areas, the Global Compact on Refugees seeks ‘to promote economic opportunities, decent work, job creation and entrepreneurship programmes for host community members and refugees, including women, young adults, older persons and persons with disabilities’. This is to include measures to promote private sector investment, recognise and strengthen skills and qualifications, close the technology gap, and expand access to financial services.</p> <p>The Global Compact also provides for measures to combat work-related abuses, most notably trafficking in persons.</p>	8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8	13, 32, 51, 57, 58, 59, 60, 64, 70, 71, 72, 77 CRRF 5(a), 5(e)
Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	<p>Recognising the challenges that large movements of refugees pose for infrastructure in hosting countries, the Global Compact on Refugees provides for the international community to ‘contribute resources and expertise to strengthen infrastructure so as to facilitate access to appropriate accommodation for refugees and host communities and to promote integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems in both urban and rural areas’.</p> <p>The Global Compact also seeks to support the closure of the ‘technology gap’ and the provision of low-cost internet access for refugees and their hosts.</p>	9.1, 9.3, 9.b, 9.c	32, 71, 78, 79

Goal	Contribution made by the Global Compact on Refugees	Relevant SDG Targets	Relevant GCR paragraphs ⁷
Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries	<p>Addressing inequality is a central concern of the Global Compact on Refugees, most notably the inequality in the distribution of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees. This burden and responsibility falls disproportionately upon low- and middle-income host countries facing their own economic and development challenges, and the Global Compact seeks to provide a basis for it to be shared more predictably and equitably among countries. In addition, the Global Compact seeks to address a similar inequality within countries by supporting the communities that host large numbers of refugees, which are often amongst the most socioeconomically deprived.</p> <p>To this end, the Global Compact provides for a range of 'Arrangements for burden- and responsibility-sharing' to be deployed to address identified 'Areas in need of support'; central amongst these is greater financial support to developing countries hosting large numbers of refugees from both public and private sources, as well as specific mechanisms such as the Global Refugee Forum and situation-specific Support Platforms. The Global Compact also addresses specific sources of inequality identified in the Sustainable Development Goals—such as discriminatory laws, policies and practices—and measures that can be taken to address inequality, including systems for social protection and facilitating the mobility of refugees (in particular to third countries through resettlement and complementary pathways).</p>	10.3, 10.4, 10.7, 10.b	1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 13, 14-48 (in particular 32, 35, 42), 65, 74, 81, 84, 90-93, 94-96 CRRF 13(b)
Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	<p>Recognizing the increasing importance of cities in refugee responses (not least because the majority of refugees live in urban areas), the Global Compact on Refugees aims to deepen engagement with municipalities and other local authorities, including in the sharing of good practices and cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences, including through twinning arrangements. Addressing security issues, accommodation challenges and improving living and working conditions in urban areas are specifically advocated.</p>	11.1	37, 38, 57, 78, 79 CRRF 5(h)
Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	<p>Large refugee situations can place a particular strain on efforts to manage natural resources sustainably and use them efficiently. The Global Compact accordingly provides for States and other stakeholders to contribute resources and expertise to strengthen relevant infrastructure to promote the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources.</p>	12.2	78
Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	<p>The Global Compact on Refugees recognises that 'climate, environmental degradation and natural disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee movements'. Although such factors are not in themselves causes of refugee movements, the Global Compact does recognise that they can lead to forced displacement requiring the support of the international community, and provides for the kinds of support that could be provided to meet the resulting humanitarian and developmental challenges.</p>	13.1	8, 9, 12, 53, 63, 79

Goal	Contribution made by the Global Compact on Refugees	Relevant SDG Targets	Relevant GCR paragraphs ⁷
Goal 15:⁸ Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	<p>The Global Compact on Refugees promotes the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems in both urban and rural areas, the use of environmental impact assessments, and the development of resilience agricultural systems in refugee-hosting areas.</p>		<p>78, 79, 81, 6(e)</p>
Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	<p>The Global Compact on Refugees seeks to address the diverse root causes of refugee movements (such as violence and persecution) and to create the conditions that would enable refugees freely to choose to return home, namely an end to conflict and the establishment of peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p> <p>Pending durable solutions, the Global Compact also promotes the establishment of similar conditions in hosting countries, as well as the protection of fundamental freedoms, the maintenance of good relations and peaceful coexistence between communities, and the protection of children. It also seeks to ensure that refugees have legal identification and access to civil registration, including birth registration. The strengthening of relevant national institutions is a key modality for achieving this.</p>	<p>16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.7, 16.9, 16.10, 16.a, 16.b</p>	<p>5, 8, 9, 13, 37, 41, 51, 56, 57, 58, 59-60, 62, 64, 72, 75, 76-77, 82, 84, 88, 92, 97, 99, 100 CRRF 5(a), 5(e), 5(f), 5(g), 7(b) 11, 12(d), 12(e)</p>

⁸ NB: Although Goal 14—‘Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development’—is vitally important, the Global Compact on Refugees does not include measures aimed directly at its fulfilment.

Goal	Contribution made by the Global Compact on Refugees	Relevant SDG Targets	Relevant GCR paragraphs ⁷
Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	<p>The Global Compact on Refugees interacts with the final Sustainable Development Goal in a multitude of cross-cutting ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Global Compact seeks to mobilize additional financial and other resources (including capacity-building support) in support of refugee responses from a range of public and private sources, including through private sector investment. • Whilst recognising the importance of national leadership in refugee responses, the Global Compact also adopts a multi-stakeholder approach and seeks to draw in a wide variety of interested stakeholders. • It seeks to close the technology gap between developed and developing countries, and to enhance the collection and use of high-quality, timely and reliable data in refugee responses. 	17.3, 17.5, 17.6, 17.9, 17.15, 17.17, 17.18	5, 20, 21, 23, 32, 33-44, 35, 37, 42, 45-48, 50, 53, 57, 58, 62, 65, 71, 73, 76, 79, 81, 82, 89, 91, 96, 99, CRRF 6(a)-(d)