

2021 UNHCR Regional Consultations with NGOs

“Inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless persons through localization of humanitarian action and engagement with communities in a post-COVID-19 context”

Session 2: How can NGOs and UNHCR join forces to enhance the access of forcibly displaced and stateless persons to social protection schemes in Europe through local actors and initiatives? - Wednesday 22 September 2021, 9:00-12:30 CET

Key definitions

In the framework of the Consultations, **localization** refers to the engagement with and support of local actors in favour of refugee protection and solutions. The definition of local actor is considered broadly, referring to non-governmental actors operating in the country in which they are headquartered without any affiliation to an international NGO, to national governmental entities operating in all areas of the country or in a specific area only, and to organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons.¹

Integration is considered as a gradual and two-way process leading to full and equal membership in society, comprising legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions. This includes preparedness by refugee communities to adapt to host societies without giving up cultural identity, and by receiving communities and institutions to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse population.

While integration is a durable solution for refugees, and implies a permanent stay in the host country, **inclusion** refers to the broader inclusion within national services, systems and economies of all forcibly displaced people upon arrival, with a view to limiting the negative effects of dependency, facilitating eventual local integration, or enabling persons of concern to live with dignity and some degree of normalcy pending an eventual return to countries of origin.

Social protection comprises a national system of laws, policies and programs aimed at preventing and protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability, social exclusion and the different range of risks encountered throughout their lifecycle, with a focus on supporting the most vulnerable to manage the different range of risks encountered. It encompasses social assistance, social insurance and labour market support.

Background

- **May 2016:** The Grand Bargain agreement called for more support and funding tools for local and national responders as well as a *participation revolution* aimed at the inclusion of people receiving aid in decision-making that affects their lives.
- **September 2020:** The global UNHCR Consultations with NGOs addressed Resilience and Inclusion. In that framework, UNHCR and NGOs decided to (i) conduct joint advocacy to include refugees in national social protection measures and socioeconomic response plans focusing on restrictions on the right to work for refugees, access to finance, social safety nets and social protection systems, and (ii) step up livelihoods and increase support to foster better resilience, by adjusting service delivery based on movement restrictions and providing guidance on rights and services. The full recommendations are available [online](#).
- **November 2020:** The European Commission presented a new [EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion \(2021-2027\)](#).
- **April 2021:** Members of the UNHCR Senior Executive Team called for regional UNHCR Consultations with NGOs to address Localization of humanitarian action and engagement with communities in the COVID-19 context. *“With local actors often being the first responders, the COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly reemphasized the importance of localization. While the principle is widely endorsed, including in the Refugee Compact and the Grand Bargain, there is still a need to increase meaningful participation of and partnerships with local actors to address humanitarian challenges faced by persons of concern. However, the modalities to develop localized responses are multifaceted and often slow to take root within our institutions. This goes well beyond directing additional resources to national NGOs to deliver services and*

¹ Providing advocacy, protection and assistance to their communities, organizations led by refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugee returnees and stateless persons, are either entirely established and led by refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, refugee returnees and stateless persons, or have more than 50% of such populations in positions of leadership and decision-making. Such organizations can be formal or informal and may or may not be officially registered/have legal recognition in the country.

also encompasses the development of various forms of partnerships with local civil society actors and the strengthening of community-based approaches. Building on renewed dynamics emerging from the pandemic, consultations with NGOs can support a transformative outcome in the localization agenda”.

- **September 2021:** The UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe (RBE) issued a regional Social Protection Policy Brief, including recommendations to NGOs. This publication will serve as a starting point for the working group discussions planned during the Consultations.

Objective

This session seeks to identify avenues for UNHCR and NGOs to enhance the effective access of refugees and stateless people to social protection schemes in Europe through local engagement.

Expected outcomes

- Joint recommendations for regional NGOs, local NGOs, UNHCR RBE, UNHCR Country Operations, municipalities and other relevant stakeholders to enhance the effective access of refugees and stateless people to social protection schemes in Europe. These recommendations will feed into the 2021 Executive Committee reporting on UNHCR Consultations with NGOs and UNHCR’s planning. Their implementation will be monitored jointly by UNHCR and NGOs using existing Regional Dialogues.
- Compilation of promising practices facilitating the access of refugees and stateless people to social protection schemes via local actors.

Leading questions for panellists and other participants

- *Taking into consideration the social protection brief, where do you see the main barriers to social protection in Europe for refugees and stateless people?*
- *What role do local actors currently play in facilitating the access to social protection for refugees and stateless people in Europe, and how could this be further strengthened?*
- *Do you see a role for local actors to make social protection systems more inclusive? In which areas, and how could this be done?*
- *Build back better: What opportunities are there for strengthening effective access to functional social protection systems for refugees and stateless people, in line with other vulnerable groups as part of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts?*

Agenda

Wednesday 22 September 2021, 9:00-12:30 CET

- **Opening** (10 minutes) by Nicolas Brass, Head of External Engagement, UNHCR RBE
- **Panel discussion** (30 minutes): Access to social protection schemes for refugees and stateless people in Europe: State of affairs
 - **Nina Murray**, Head of Policy and Research, European Network on Statelessness
 - **Susanne Klink**, Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer, UNHCR RBE
 - **Petra Hueck**, Europe Director, The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), SHARE Network

Facilitator: Alex Mundt, Senior Policy Advisor, UNHCR RBE

- **Q&A** (15 minutes)

Facilitator: Loise Dai Rocheteau, Policy Officer - Forced Migration, ICVA

- **Panel discussion** (30 minutes): Promising practices facilitating the access of refugees and stateless people to social protection schemes via local actors
 - Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU), Czech Republication (speaker TBD)
 - Cyprus Refugee Council, Cyprus (speaker TBD)
 - Georgia (speaker TBD)

Facilitator: Angela Carvajalino, Senior Partnership Officer, UNHCR RBE

- **Q&A** (15 minutes)
- **Break** (15 minutes)
- **Working group discussion** (45 minutes):
 - Working group on local advocacy
 - Working group on information, legal and social counselling and assistance
- **Plenary** (30 minutes): Identification of recommendations stemming from working group discussions
Facilitator: Caroline Dulin Brass, Senior Community-Based Protection Officer, UNHCR RBE
- **Conclusion and wrap-up** (15 minutes) by Alex Mundt, Senior Policy Advisor, UNHCR RBE, and Jérôme Elie, Head of Forced Migration, ICVA
- **Closing** (5 minutes) by Nicolas Brass, Head of External Engagement, UNHCR RBE

Background document

UNHCR Policy Brief on Social Protection (which will be shared one day prior to this session).

ECRE, ICVA and UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe – September 2021