

Terms of reference

UNHCR's Advisory Board for Engagement, and Partnership with Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons

Organizations led by forcibly displaced people, including refugee-led organizations (RLOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) are often the first responders in humanitarian emergencies and can provide support and services in areas where UNHCR and partners have limited or no access. Community members are the persons most knowledgeable about their own needs, and the best advisers on what approaches are suited in their local area. It is, therefore, necessary that UNHCR and other actors understand, engage with, partner with, and support the networks and organizations of community members, to strengthen and expand the support and services they provide to refugees, other forcibly displaced, and stateless communities.

UNHCR, like other UN agencies and civil society actors, made the [commitment](#) at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 to, “empower national and local humanitarian action” and thus, to work towards greater localization. Moreover, the [New York Declaration](#) and the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) both refer to the importance of engaging directly with forcibly displaced persons themselves. The [2019 Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) pledges equally stipulate that engagement and partnerships with displaced and stateless persons and require UNHCR and partners to ensure that displaced and stateless persons are meaningfully engaged throughout the process. Engaging with Community based Organizations (CBOs) is also rooted in [UNHCR's community-based protection approach](#) and the [age, gender and diversity policy](#) through which UNHCR committed to put persons of concern at the center of decisions that affect their lives and to ensure accountability to affected people.

Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless People

UNHCR's cross-divisional *Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by persons under UNHCR's mandate* was created to align internal efforts and support various work streams related to UNHCR's engagement and partnership with persons of concern-led organizations. The Task Team has the following main deliverables:

1. Develop guidance on engagement and partnership with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons.
2. Develop a modality for partnership with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons.
3. Conduct a mapping and maintain an up-to-date database of organizations led by displaced and stateless persons.
4. Follow up on GRF pledges on meaningful participation and partnership with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons.
5. Create a repository and develop capacity building material to enhance partnerships with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

1. *Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons*

UNHCR's engagement with organizations of displaced and stateless communities is inclusive of all population groups addressed by its mandate (referred to as Persons of Concern to UNHCR)

For this purpose, the term *Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons* should be understood to encompass:

- refugee-led organizations (RLOs),
- community-based organizations (CBOs) of internally displaced people, returnees, and stateless people,
- women-led organizations of refugee, internally displaced people, returnees, and stateless people,
- youth-led organizations of refugee, internally displaced people, returnees, and stateless people,
- organizations led by older persons,
- organizations of persons with disabilities of refugee, internally displaced people, returnees, and stateless people,

and LGBTIQ+ persons-led organizations of refugee internally displaced people, returnees, and stateless people

The term *Organizations led by displaced and stateless persons* is not intended to replace any other terms with which various entities identify, but should rather be seen as an inclusive umbrella term.

2. *Meaningful participation*

UNHCR defines participation as, “the full and equal involvement of all members of the community in decision-making processes and activities that affect their lives, in both public and private spheres¹.”

Similarly, the [Global Refugee-led Network \(GRN\)](#) defines meaningful refugee participation as “...when refugees — regardless of location, legal recognition, gender, identity and demographics — are prepared for and participate in fora and processes where strategies are being developed and/or decisions are being made (including at local, national, regional, and global levels, and especially when they facilitate interactions with host states, donors, or other influential bodies), in a manner that is ethical, sustained, safe, and supported financially.”²

3. *Age, Gender and Diversity*

Age, gender, and diversity considerations guide all aspects of UNHCR's work, informed by the imperatives of promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls, as well as by the best interests of the child. As we hold ourselves accountable to persons under UNHCR's mandate, the views of women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds need to inform our interventions, advocacy, and programmes (UNHCR AGD Policy, 2018).

¹ A Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations (2008), <https://www.unhcr.org/47f0a6712.pdf>

²

<https://www.unhcr.org/publications/brochures/61b28b734/meaningful-refugee-participation-transformative-leadership-guidelines-concrete.html>

TERMS OF REFERENCE

An Advisory Board will be established with the participation of key networks of RLOs and CBOs who play an active role in advocating for meaningful participation of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

The Advisory Board will act as a representative body for organizations led by Displaced and Stateless persons and will play a critical role in the following tasks:

- Assist in developing and defining the guiding principles for equal and meaningful participation at policy and strategic level;
- Contribute to guidance on meaningful participation,
- Supports the follow up on Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledges on meaningful participation.
- Highlights gaps and identify promising practices of partnerships with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons; and
- Support the identification and coaching of organization led by displaced and stateless people representatives to global events and policy discussions.

ROLE

The Advisory Board is established to provide strategic policy advice based on their experiences and to represent the voices of the organizations they represent.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applicants will apply through this [form](#). The deadline for applications is **Wednesday 18 May 2022**.

The Interim Advisory working group, an external independent organization and UNHCR will review applications against criterion of membership – considering the decided compositions (Regional, status and AGD balance), with the support of the RUNV Assistant of the Task Team .

MEMBERSHIP

Structure

The Advisory Board consists of 15-25 members. All members are appointed through a competitive application process. 'Members' are **Organizations led Displaced and Stateless Persons**, represented by individuals.

Composition and representation

The composition of the Advisory Board should facilitate and reflect a regional balance as well as the diversity among forcibly displaced and stateless individuals who meet the selection criteria. This both includes individual characteristics of a member and focus areas of their respective organizations.

The Advisory Board must ensure the inclusion of women, LGBTIQ+ persons, youth, people living with a disability, older persons, ethnic and religious minorities and indigenous peoples, and other diverse groups as defined by the [UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy \(2018\)](#).³

The legal registration of the organizations led by displaced and stateless persons in the country where they operate do not influence the participation of the organizations in the Advisory Board.

Selection criteria for Advisory Board members

- The leadership of the organizations currently hold refugee status, have sought asylum, or experienced forced displacement.
- Organization demonstrates experience consulting and engaging with diverse displaced communities in their region and beyond (if applicable) and demonstrated ability to run genuine consultations.
- Demonstrated engagement of the organization in refugee policy discussions.
- Demonstrated commitment by the organization to inclusion and meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons.
- Organization demonstrates deep knowledge and understanding of the interests and concerns of diverse forcibly displaced and stateless populations, recognizing that each member organization may have expertise working in and/or with one or more specific communities.
- Demonstrated experience of the organization working in advisory groups, boards or similar structures.
- Organization contributes to the cohort's demographic, regional, age, and gender diversity.
- Demonstrated ability to work in English⁴
- Willingness to commit a minimum of 5 hours a month to the work of the Advisory Board over a 24-month period.
- Commitment to participate fully in the Advisory Board activities and ability to contribute to Advisory Board processes and consultation activities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MEMBERS

Members are expected to participate in meetings, community consultations, and work projects; advise the Secretariat when they have completed agreed actions arising from previous meetings; and maintain links with the community.

SUPPORT PERSONS

- People living with disabilities may have a support person attend meetings with them (to assist with physical needs or to advise members with intellectual disability).
- Other members may seek the Board's approval to have a support person attend meetings with them to advise them on Advisory Group processes, or to act as their translator.
- These support persons will not directly contribute to Advisory Board discussions or have voting rights.

³<https://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/5aa13c0c7/policy-age-gender-diversity-accountability-2018.html>

⁴ Certain exceptions may be made for applicants with working language of the UN (French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese), but at this time cannot be guaranteed.

SECRETARIAT SUPPORT

Secretariat support to the Advisory Board will be provided by UNHCR. The Secretariat is responsible for:

- Developing agendas for Advisory Board meetings in consultation with the members.
- Distributing the agenda and meeting papers in appropriate formats.
- Taking minutes, clearing them with Advisory Board members, revising as needed, producing them in the required format and distributing them, normally within two weeks of an Advisory Board meeting.
- Monitoring action items arising from Advisory Board business and assisting in their implementation, including liaising between the Advisory Board and other relevant agencies.
- If relevant, supporting necessary travel, accommodation, and catering arrangements within a determined budget.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

- Appointments will be for 2 years per board member per term.
- No individual member may serve more than two terms a total of 4 years.
- The Advisory Board may form sub-committees to undertake specific work and/or co-opt individuals with expertise for certain tasks.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- Where a member is unable to attend a meeting, that member should notify UNHCR's Secretariat, stating the reason for the absence.
- Membership may be revoked if a member organization fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings.

VACATION OF THE ROLE

Member organizations may resign from the Advisory Board at any time provided they notify the Secretariat in writing, stating their intention to resign from the Advisory Board, at least four weeks prior to the date of resignation.

OPERATIONS

GENERAL MEETINGS

- The Advisory Board meets 6 times per year (bi-monthly meetings). Additional out-of-session meetings may be formed if necessary.
- A draft agenda will be developed prior to each meeting by the Secretariat in consultation with the members. In developing the agenda, consideration will be given to tasks/requests for advice from the UNHCR to the Advisory Board. The agenda should have clear objectives that will advance the Advisory Board's work program.

- The agenda and related papers are to be circulated to members no less than one week prior to the meeting.
- Meetings are to be facilitated by a member using a rotation method whereby a different member facilitates each meeting.
- Whenever possible, decisions of the Advisory Board are to be made by consensus, or if consensus cannot be reached, by a majority vote of those members present.
- A member who abstains from voting or dissents from the majority ruling can request to have their action recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- At each meeting, Advisory Board members are to provide brief reports on consultations they have attended or held and any significant issues arising.

QUORUM

For decisions to be made at meetings there is to be a quorum of no less than half the total current number of members plus one.

OUT OF SESSION MATTERS

The Advisory Board may deal with matters out-of-session.

Where an urgent response is required from Advisory Board members between meetings, the Secretariat must endeavor to alert members to the relevant business via email, text message, or other appropriate means, providing a clear timeframe for response.

Where a matter requiring resolution is to be dealt with in an out of session paper, agreement by two thirds of Advisory Board members is required for assent.

CONSULTATIONS

The Advisory Group members are expected to undertake regular consultation with their community network to inform Advisory Board business. This may be done at routine meetings of community organizations, or through specially scheduled meetings, and should be reported to the Advisory Board.

CODE OF CONDUCT

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Unless indicated otherwise, all Advisory Board papers, documents, and minutes are confidential.
- Members may, on occasion, be provided with other confidential material, which they should not disclose to anyone outside the Advisory Board and should treat with the utmost care and discretion.
- Breach of these confidentiality requirements may result in termination of a member's appointment, at the discretion of the Secretariat.

RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

- To promote a positive, inclusive and safe environment for all, the members of the Advisory Board are required to exercise respectful communication during all meetings and in interactions among AB members as well as in engaging with members of UNHCR.
- Members of the Advisory Board should refrain from using disrespectful or derogatory language towards other Board members or UNHCR staff.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Conflict of interest is defined as any instance where an Advisory Board member has a direct financial or other interest in matters under consideration or proposed for consideration by the Advisory Board.

Advisory Board members are expected to observe the highest standards of ethical conduct, including honesty, courtesy, fairness and conflict of interest, as outlined in [UNHCR's Code of Conduct Policy](#). A member must disclose to the Secretariat any situation that may give rise to a conflict of interest, a potential conflict of interest, or a potential perceived conflict of interest. The Secretariat will make the determination whether there are adequate grounds for excluding a member from any related discussion or decision making regarding a conflict-of-interest issue.

TERMINATION

The Secretariat retains the discretion to terminate a member's appointment to the Advisory Board upon notice of not less than four weeks for reasons including breach of confidentiality, breach of attendance requirements, failure to disclose a conflict of interest and/or breach of the Code of Conduct.