



# WHERE WE STAND

STOCKTAKING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
PLEDGES MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY AT THE 2019  
GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM

December 2021

# Executive Summary

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) recognizes the important role of civil society in shaping GCR commitments and translating them into action – and civil society organizations are demonstrating this in practice. A third of all those who made pledges at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) were civil society entities, such as non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and organizations led by refugees, internally displaced and stateless people. Civil society pledges span across all seven areas of focus for the 2019 GRF, namely protection capacity, education, statelessness, solutions, jobs and livelihoods, responsibility sharing arrangements, and energy and infrastructure. They include commitments to provide material or technical support, commitments to address legislation and policy issues, financial commitments, and commitments to help expand resettlement and complementary pathways.

Civil society pledges are more inclusive of marginalized groups than those made by any other stakeholder group. Forty-five per cent of civil society pledges have demonstrated attention to age, gender and diversity in their implementation, higher than the overall rate for all pledges of 36 per cent. Furthermore, civil society has mobilized more quickly than others to implement the pledges they made. Two years after the GRF, civil society organizations have implemented up to 66 per cent of their pledges, a higher rate of completion than the 45 per cent for all pledges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly delayed, or stalled, implementation of some pledges, with the associated restrictions making it harder to deliver essential protection services and engage with partners. The reprioritization of funding by some donors in favour of the COVID-19 response also disrupted programming by civil society and restricted their access to long-term funding.

Challenges faced by local organizations, in particular, include a lack of direct and predictable funding, as well as a lack of recognition of their role and the linked issue of exclusion from strategic decision-making fora. In addition, a disconnect between the level of commitment to the GCR's objectives at the global level and relative unawareness of this ground-breaking framework at national and local levels impedes progress.

At the same time, delivery of civil society pledges is moving faster than pledges for other stakeholder groups, and there are opportunities to further accelerate implementation. The pandemic has catalysed creative responses to address emerging needs and challenges faced by communities. It has triggered increased investment in previously neglected programme areas in refugee response, such as health, and increased many actors' appreciation of the essential role of local actors in response. Going forward, matching civil society pledges with aligned or complementary pledges made by other stakeholders may be an important strategy to facilitate delivery of stalled pledges.

On the basis of an analysis of civil society pledges and a review of good practices elevated through stocktaking events and reports authored by civil society organizations, this report reaches the following conclusions:

- Civil society is at the frontline in implementing the GCR, and essential to its success.
- Civil society is instrumental in ensuring meaningful participation and leadership of refugees and other marginalized groups, which is at the heart of the GCR vision.
- Civil society actors have innovated to address challenges and are making good progress in implementing the pledges they have made.
- There are specific, but solvable, challenges to civil society delivering against pledges, and these challenges need to be addressed.
- If sufficiently empowered, supported and funded, civil society has great potential to deliver even more – and action taken now can unlock this potential in advance of the 2023 GRF.



Leaders gather for the 2019 Global Refugee Forum.

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# Introduction

This report explores the progress made by civil society in realizing pledges made at the 2019 [Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF) and extracts key lessons to inform action and discussions in the lead up to the 2023 GRF.

Part I of this report provides an overview of the pledges made and their implementation status at the end of 2021. It also explores gaps and challenges, as well as opportunities to facilitate implementation. Part II captures good practices implemented by civil society organizations, looking at different thematic areas of focus.

For the purpose of this report, the civil society includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), and organizations led by refugees, internally displaced and stateless people (hereafter referred to as RLOs). It is not possible in one document to do justice to the many efforts and contributions made by civil society to deliver their commitments in support of refugees, therefore, this report focuses almost exclusively on joint pledges with a global reach and highlights a few selected individual pledges with substantial implementation progress.

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Civil society representatives with the UNHCR High Commissioner at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum.

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## PART I.

# OVERVIEW OF CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN GCR IMPLEMENTATION

# 1. The central role civil society has played in the GCR

The Compact recognizes the robust role of civil society organizations in assessing community strengths and needs, designing and implementing inclusive and accessible programmes and building capacity among people forced to flee.<sup>1</sup>

Civil society actively contributed to the process of developing the GCR, “by emphasizing the importance of the process, contributing ideas, and encouraging the Compact’s adoption and full implementation”.<sup>2</sup> Among 490 written contributions which helped shape the text of the GCR, 160 were received from civil society actors.<sup>3</sup> Within the framework of GCR, FBOs and RLOs are characterized as strong and significant constituencies; for instance, the GCR highlights the role of FBOs in supporting “the planning and delivery of arrangements to assist refugees and host communities, including in the areas of conflict prevention, reconciliation, and peacebuilding”.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Global Compact on Refugees, para. 40.

2 Gillian D. Triggs, Patrick C. J. Wall, 'The Makings of a Success: The Global Compact on Refugees and the Inaugural Global Refugee Forum', *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Volume 32, Issue 2, June 2020, 298.

3 *ibid.*

4 Global Compact on Refugees, para. 41.

At the first GRF in 2019, civil society was represented by 250 organizations, each contributing through their individual or joint pledges with other stakeholders.<sup>5</sup> At the time of writing, **the total number of pledges made by civil society is 361**. Of these, 51 were made by FBOs and relate mainly to responsibility sharing arrangements and the organization of campaigns and other mechanisms to welcome, protect, promote and integrate refugees and migrants in host communities. Equally important was the role of civil society in elevating refugee voices. RLO networks such as the Global Refugee-Led Network (GRN) contributed significantly to effective, diverse and inclusive engagement of refugees at the event, including through convening several refugee-led summits at regional level to ensure that refugee communities were able to contribute to the discussions held in the context of the GRF. At the 2019 GRF, over 70 refugee participants, representing five regions and different ages, genders, and other diversity considerations, were supported by UNHCR and RLO networks to attend and contribute to the discussions as speakers, pledge-makers, members of State and multi-stakeholder delegation.

Crucially, civil society stepped up not only at the pledging stage, but also throughout implementation, analyzing the process of delivery, and drawing valuable lessons. Shortly after the 2019 GRF, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) – a global network of humanitarian NGOs – supported NGOs with analyzing and understanding the deliberations and results emanating from the GRF, as well as an initial mapping of the GRF “implementation landscape”. ICVA provided ongoing support to facilitate NGOs’ engagement in GCR implementation, particularly through information dissemination from relevant meetings and global mechanisms such as the three support platforms. At the same time, a number of regional, global and stakeholder-specific stocktaking exercises by NGOs, RLOs, FBOs and other civil society actors were convened. These included UNHCR [Monthly Consultation](#) with NGOs on the GCR and GRF in the context of COVID-19 in May 2020, a

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5 UNHCR, Outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum 2019, 13.



[virtual webinar](#) jointly convened by INTERSOS and ICVA in March 2021, a global stocktaking event co-organized by UNHCR and ICVA which gathered over one hundred participants from civil society in October 2021, and a series of GRF stocktaking sessions at five [UNHCR-NGO Regional Consultations](#), as part of the annual exchange between UNHCR and civil society actors.

Civil society organizations also accelerated the delivery of GRF pledges by undertaking research to generate evidence which could then be used to hold pledging entities accountable for implementation and progress. Notably, InterAction's report "[Toward equitable and predictable responsibility sharing: An analysis of state pledges at the Global Refugee Forum](#)" analyzed some 815 commitments made by over 130 states, to assess their significance and whether the international community is moving toward more equitable responsibility sharing for refugees. Similarly, the joint report undertaken by the Danish Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee and Norwegian Refugee Council, "[The Global Compact on Refugees three years on: Navigating barriers and maximizing incentives in support of refugees and host countries](#)", provided a snapshot of changes in refugee policies and practices since the adoption of the GCR and the type of support needed to facilitate access to durable solutions. Both reports called for greater financial support for refugee-hosting countries, more commitments to offer adequate third-country solutions, further investment on GCR implementation at country level and urgent prioritization of more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing for refugees before the next GRF in 2023.

## 2. Implementation progress

**Civil society formed the largest group in terms of the number of pledging entities at the 2019 GRF**, with 172 civil society organizations submitting pledges at both the global and regional levels, accounting for a third of all pledging entities.

FIGURE 1 | NUMBER OF PLEDGING ENTITIES

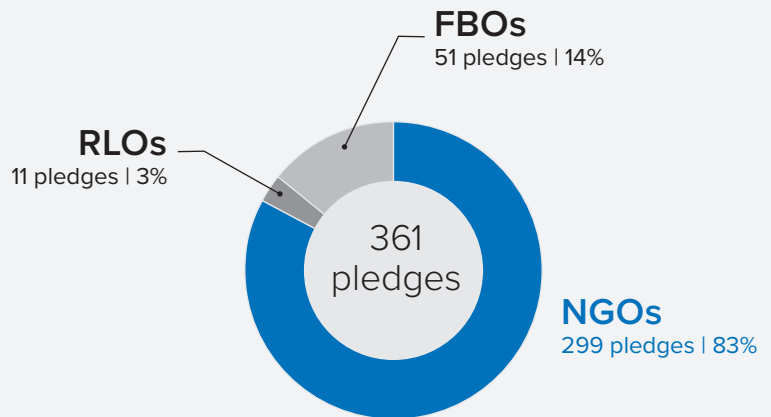
Civil society organizations (NGOs, FBOs, RLOs)	172
States	125
Sports organizations	120
Private sector organizations	73
International organizations	48
Academics and Researchers	40
Cities, municipalities and local authorities	14
Parliaments	3
Others	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>607</b>

**A significant majority of civil society pledges were made by NGOs.**

Out of some 361 pledges submitted by civil society, those made by NGOs accounted for two-thirds, followed by FBOs, and RLOs.

FIGURE 2

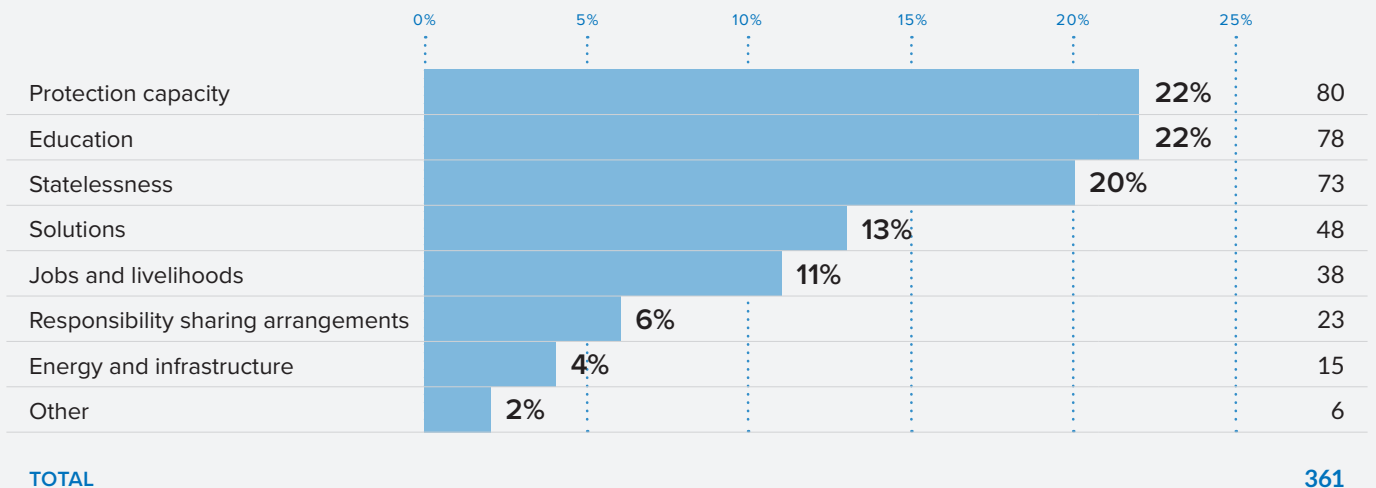
**NUMBER OF PLEDGES**  
| BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS



**Civil society made pledges across all areas of focus**, with the highest number in Protection capacity, Education, Statelessness, Solutions and Jobs and livelihoods.

FIGURE 3

**NUMBER OF PLEDGES MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**  
| BY AREA OF FOCUS

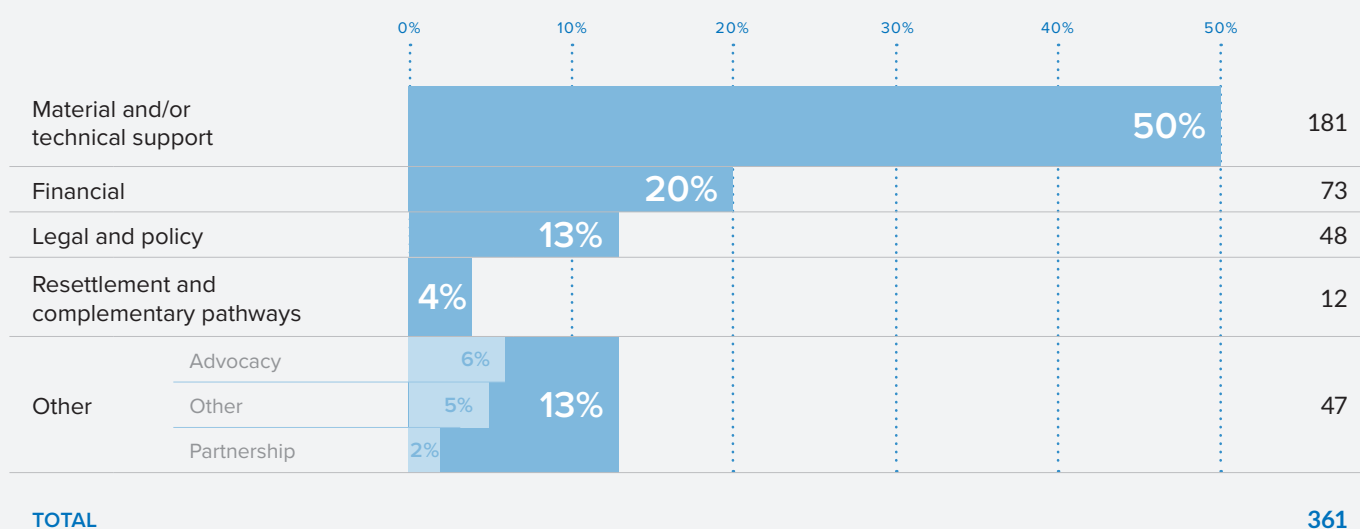


**Pledges made by civil society organizations demonstrated a high rate of inclusion of different groups of persons of concern (POC) to UNHCR**, such as women and girls, children and youth, LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced, people with disabilities, people who are at risk of SGBV, and older people. Civil society pledges account for one-third of the Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) sensitive pledges at the GRF, and in the latest round of updates, 45 per cent of civil society pledges were reported to incorporate an AGD focus in their implementation, higher than the overall rate of 36 per cent.

**All five types of pledges at the 2019 GRF were covered by civil society**, which includes Material and/or technical support, Financial, Legal and policy, and Resettlement and Complementary pathways. Interestingly, a closer look at the “Other” category indicates several distinct contributions by civil society organizations to the GRF, notably in Advocacy and Partnership.

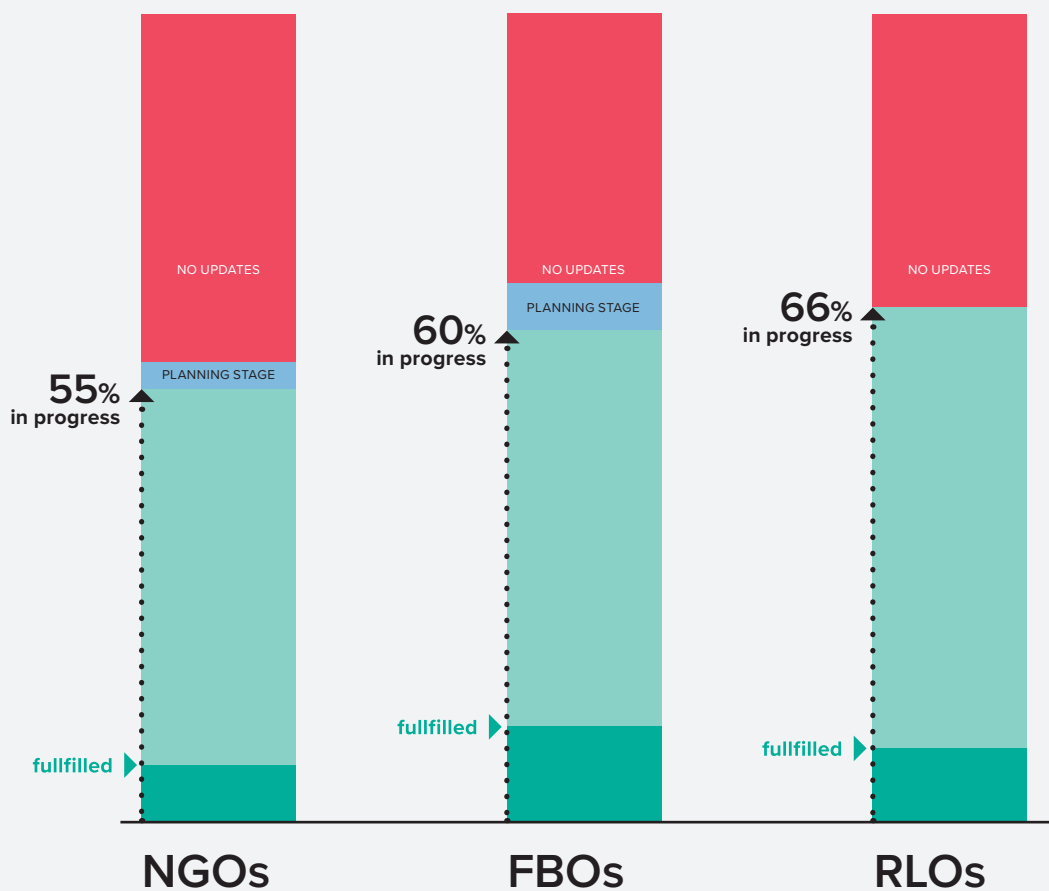
FIGURE 4

## NUMBER OF PLEDGES MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS | BY TYPE



**The rate of implementation of pledges made by civil society is high relative to pledges made by other stakeholder groups.** At the time of writing, reports on implementation status were received for over 200 pledges made by civil society organizations, of which over seven per cent are fulfilled and 47 per cent are in progress. The rate of pledge implementation by civil society is higher than the overall rate of 45 per cent.

FIGURE 5  
**PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PLEDGES MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**



## 3. Gaps and challenges

### 1 The impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic led, *inter alia*, to the following challenges in the implementation of civil society pledges:

- **Decreased ability to deliver essential protection services**

Border closures and suspension of national and local services due to the pandemic lockdowns have forced many civil society organizations, particularly international ones, to slow down the pace of their work, or even suspend some of their planned programming. Even though some organizations adapted their services and models through a variety of digital platforms, delivery remained limited because affected populations often live in hard-to-reach areas with little connectivity and limited access to digital devices.

- **Difficulty in engaging with other stakeholders, including with local actors**

International civil society organizations had difficulty in facilitating the participation of local communities in national and local coordination fora, due to travel restrictions and increasing xenophobia towards refugee and migrant populations. The latter inhibited meaningful participation and leadership of refugees and RLOs at all stages of pledge implementation. In addition, changing ways of working, such as shifting to digital platforms, initially caused delays in communication and access to information, making it harder to identify opportunities to ‘match’ pledges (for example, by sourcing funding from a new partner to facilitate delivery of a

pledge) or initiate other collaborations. Entities that had made joint pledges were likewise affected by the increased difficulty in developing and implementing collaborative plans to realize their commitments.

- **Difficulty in securing funding for programming**

Even before the pandemic, humanitarian actors often experienced short-term financing, with the funding cycles of less than 12 months.<sup>6</sup> COVID-19 compounded this issue, refocusing the priorities of many stakeholders including States and donors from longer-term programming to emergency responses. This caused delays in delivering services, difficulty in long-term planning, and the tendency of focusing on meeting immediate humanitarian needs rather than addressing the root causes of those needs. Local civil society actors also reported having to make difficult choices about what programming to maintain given their limited resources.

## **2** Limited awareness of the GCR at the national and local levels

Civil society also reported a contrast between the intensive discussions at the global level and the limited extent of recognition or uptake of its key principles at local and national levels, and within organizations themselves. This reflects an important gap in communication within and between key stakeholders. If the importance and relevance of the GCR at national or local levels is not clearly articulated, this limits the level of buy-in for the shifts in approach which is required for implementing the GCR. The result is limited commitment to plan for and effect change, leading to low or no impact. Therefore, there is an urgent need to foster local level understanding of and support for the GCR, and the opportunity for strengthening and extending inclusive national systems that it affords.

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<sup>6</sup> International Rescue Committee, 'The Grand Bargain: Three Years on Multi-year Humanitarian Financing', September 2019.

### 3 Challenges that are specific to local actors

RLOs and other local actors have reported challenges that are specific to their types of organizations, such as:

- **Lack of direct and predictable funding**

In 2018, local and national civil society actors collectively accounted for only two per cent of total multi-year humanitarian funding.<sup>7</sup> A recent study by Asylum Access also estimated that of the USD\$ 30 billion in the global humanitarian system, less than one per cent goes directly to RLOs.<sup>8</sup> The lack of direct and predictable funding is a major barrier to organizational sustainability of local actors, making it difficult for them to retain qualified staff and plan for sustained interventions. It is reported that RLOs are more likely than other civil society organizations to experience high turnover in leadership, and overall talent departure – leaving programming in the hands of volunteers who tend to be less experienced and less invested in the organization.

- **Lack of visibility and representation**

Another challenge faced by local and community-based organizations, is their lack of involvement in decision-making processes and coordination structures. Local organizations and RLOs are often treated as sub-contractors and not fully included in strategic and decision-making processes. They are less likely to be viewed as trusted partners by the international community and are routinely excluded from high-level discussions. They seldom receive adequate acknowledgement of their contribution and can often be invisible. In fact, these organizations have hands-on experience and extensive knowledge of the context, and significant potential to speed up humanitarian responses. In an effort to enhance the representation and meaningful participation of local and community-based organizations, UNHCR established a Task Team on engagement and partnership with POC-led organizations, and the Interim Advisory Board with the participation of key RLOs, organizations led by women, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities, and other POCs.

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<sup>7</sup> Development Initiatives, 'Multi-year Humanitarian Funding: Global Baselines and Trends', March 2020, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Asylum Access, 'Building Equitable Partnerships: An Asylum Access Position Paper', December 2021, 3-4.



## 4. Opportunities

### • Innovation in response to the constraints imposed by the pandemic

COVID-19, while slowing implementation in some areas, is also prompting all stakeholders to change their way of operating and explore new approaches to realizing the GCR goal of ensuring more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing. Some civil society organizations reported that the effectiveness of remote working has prompted the development of new projects, especially in hard-to-reach areas. For instance, new remote legal counselling practices have been implemented by PILnet and AsyLex, which have allowed staff and volunteer lawyers to maintain support for refugee and other forcibly displaced clients – and even to expand the services they can provide. Civil society organizations working in education and mental health and psychosocial support have innovated their content and delivery of services, reaching a much wider audience.

### • Strengthened investment in previously under-valued programme areas

The pandemic has also heightened the importance of several previously under-represented programme areas in refugee responses, which have expanded as a result. One of these is health – an intersectional and cross-cutting issue offering multiple entry points for different stakeholders. In the context of the pandemic, there is both an opportunity and an imperative for stakeholders to reinforce existing health-related pledges or make new ones. Now more than ever before, the aim of improving the health of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people, is seen as an essential component of the public response and efforts to strengthen national health systems.

- **Increased understanding of the contribution and potential of local actors**

The role of local actors, including populations affected by humanitarian crises and displacement, has become more prominent than ever. Young people, in particular, have shown leadership, creativity and passionate engagement in finding solutions during COVID-19, and are more commonly seen as a source of expertise and capacity than they were before. In other contexts, refugees, community leaders, women and other local actors, have become civil society organizations’ “presence, eyes and ears on the ground,” as described by one NGO.

- **The potential to accelerate implementation of pledges through matching**

Matching pledges that have similar or complementary objectives, can be an effective strategy to kick-start or accelerate delivery of pledges that are stalled. Examples have so far mainly involved matching pledges by host countries and donors. However, there is a significant potential for matching between civil society pledges and States pledges. As an example, mechanisms such as the Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG) provides a platform where States who have made pledges relating to national asylum systems can request capacity support. Currently, the ACSG has more open requests from States for capacity support than offers of capacity support. This is potentially where civil society organizations could bring their expertise, resources, and competencies, including through capacity- and needs-assessment of the national asylum system, and/or provision of information and legal aid to asylum-seekers and refugees.

# 5. Conclusions

**1. Civil society is at the frontline in implementing the GCR, and essential to its success.** The central role of civil society organizations – as pioneers in making commitments, providers of resources and expertise, sources of valuable learning, as well as boots on the ground – cannot be overemphasized. Civil society organizations are present at community level, providing both life-saving services and sustained support, across all programme areas, in almost every location. In addition, with lived experience of forced displacement, organizations led by refugees, internally displaced and stateless people are most knowledgeable about their own needs and are well placed to offer perspectives essential to the development of smart, practical, and sustainable programmes for their communities.

The collective capacity of civil society is considerable, and this is reflected in the high proportion of pledges they generated. Civil society organizations are almost always the first responders and witnesses, gathering and sharing information in real time using local networks. For all these reasons, they are a high value stakeholder group – essential to realizing the vision of the GCR.

**2. Civil society is instrumental in ensuring meaningful participation and leadership of refugees and other marginalized groups.** Civil society organizations successfully ensured diverse refugee voices at the first GRF, and continue to work to facilitate contact and outreach, build capacity, share lessons learned and support the engagement of refugees in the implementation of pledges. Their pledges demonstrated a higher level of attention to inclusion of marginalized groups than those of other stakeholders. These efforts are key to advancing the whole-of-society approach of the GCR, and ensuring the implementation of practical and sustainable programmes that impact the lives of refugees and other affected populations.

**3. Civil society actors have innovated to address challenges and are making good progress in implementing the pledges they have made.** The relatively high rate of pledge implementation amongst civil society organizations as compared to

other stakeholder groups is a result of concerted and wide-ranging efforts made by this group. Civil society actors undertook activities ranging from research and data collection, consultative workshops to multi-year programmes. They also showed great resilience and flexibility through harnessing the power of technology to develop approaches and creative responses to displacement. The COVID-19 response has not only catalysed new ways of working for civil society organizations, it has also accelerated the implementation of pledges in some areas, and brought local actors to the forefront of refugee responses. There are many examples of good practice where new partnerships and innovative approaches have helped delivery against commitments made in 2019.

**4. There are specific, but solvable, challenges to civil society delivering against pledges, and these challenges must be addressed.**

These include practical challenges related to restrictions of movement which can be addressed by policy changes, as well as access to sustained and predictable funding, and related capacity constraints. Matching has the potential to address funding and capacity issues. The upcoming HLOM is an important opportunity to identify areas in need of further support and engagement, and to leverage other stakeholders' commitments in support of delivering against civil society pledges. At the same time, more efforts need to be made to address the disconnect between attitudes to the GCR at the global and local levels. Whilst this remains the case, it limits the opportunity for civil society to leverage the GCR and related pledges to achieve positive changes in their context.

**5. If empowered, supported and funded, civil society has great potential to deliver even more – and action taken now can unlock this potential in advance of the 2023 GRF.**

In 2019, NGOs made the majority of civil society pledges, demonstrating that there is considerable unrealized potential for FBOs, RLOs and other civil society actors to make and deliver on ambitious GCR-related commitments. In the lead up to the 2023 GRF, it will be important to begin to realize this potential by pro-actively engaging with a wide range of different types of civil society organizations. This engagement should focus on elevating their voices, bringing them into strategic decision-making, providing long-term capacity building and institutional strengthening, as well as ensuring flexible, predictable and sustained funding.



Children participated in Return to Learning programme organized by Save the Children in Rwamwanja refugee settlement, Uganda.

© SAVE THE CHILDREN / HANNAH MAULE-FINCH

## PART II.

# GOOD PRACTICES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GRF PLEDGES

The good practices of civil society organizations included in this report are grouped by the GRF thematic areas of focus, in the order of the number of pledges. They mainly focus on joint pledges with a significant number of pledging entities; and a few selected individual pledges with substantial implementation progress. The report draws on, inter alia, results from a desk review of pledge updates extracted from [the GRF dashboard](#) as of November 2021, outcomes from the 2021 [UNHCR-NGO Regional Consultations](#), global and thematic stocktaking events with NGOs and the civil society held throughout 2020 – 2021, as well as a number of UNHCR and NGO reports on the GCR implementation.

# 1. Protection Capacity

## Child protection



### PLEDGING ENTITY

Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts (30+ NGOs, UN agencies and philanthropy organizations)

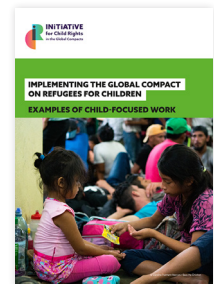


### PLEDGE

Facilitate learning, exchange and collaboration for a child-centered implementation of the GCR

The Initiative continued to advocate for a child-focused approach in responses to refugee situations and for the participation of children and youth, including through convening regular opportunities for learning, exchange and collaboration where States, civil society and other stakeholders from different regions shared experiences and examples on child- and gender- sensitive GCR implementation. Specifically, the Initiative organized a high-level stocktaking event in January 2021 to discuss child-focused GCR responses and the lack of focus on child protection. In collaboration with other actors, the Initiative supported events on Age, Gender and Diversity and on child and youth participation. The Initiative published a [compilation](#) of examples of approaches that were implemented by its members and have proven effective for refugee children. For instance, Save the Children developed [a tool](#) that helps predict displacement, how it will affect children, and, in so doing, anticipates their protection needs. In Colombia, Plan International and a network of service provision partners deployed a mobile team to provide new arrivals and vulnerable populations, especially undocumented migrants, with psychological first aid, vital information on sexual and reproductive rights and service availability, as well as specialized health services including vaccinations, and dental services for children.

[Report on child-focused work in line with the Global Compact on Refugees](#)



.../... Child protection



Faith Action for Children on the Move Coalition (14 FBOs)



- Enhance capacity of faith actors in child protection and safeguard
- Provide support for resettlement and complementary pathways with a specific focus on children and young people from refugee and host communities

At the GRF, the Coalition made pledges to meet the needs and rights of children on the move. Members of the Coalition have provided mental health and psychosocial, physical and material support, as well as advocated for the rights of children on the move in Lebanon, Bangladesh, and the Syria and Venezuela refugee responses, among others. Notably, World Vision launched a **US\$350 million COVID-19 response** to limit the spread of COVID-19 and reduce its impact on vulnerable children and families in 70 countries, reaching 72 million people including **36 million children**. World Vision’s global network of some **80,000 faith leaders** also mobilized to combat misinformation and coordinate

community-level, context-specific responses to COVID-19 through Whatsapp and radio. Arigatou International developed and disseminated practical resources for local faith actors to support and protect children during the pandemic while launching the “[Global Week of Faith in Action for Children](#)” and a [virtual exhibition](#) showcasing articles, artworks and multimedia

projects by more than 150 children around the world. Other members of the Coalition such as the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI) contributed to gathering evidence on the role of faith actors for children on the move, through a number of [webinars](#) and learning exchanges.

[Faith in Action for Children's virtual exhibition](#)





## Legal aid



### PLEDGING ENTITY

PILnet - The Global Network for Public Interest Law (80+ NGOs, RLOs, legal organizations, law firms, bar associations and researchers)



### PLEDGE

Mobilize the global legal community to protect and find solutions for refugees and displaced people

The pledge brought together an unprecedented number of stakeholders working in legal aid to collectively address the diverse and unmet legal needs of refugees and other forcibly displaced people. To translate their commitments into action, the GRF Legal Community Pledge Core Group was established to carry out a number of activities, including the establishment of the [GRF Legal Community Pledge matching portal](#) – the first global platform to support matching of matters by local legal aid actors and relevant RLOs and NGOs with the pro bono hours pledged by the global legal community, the development and dissemination of tools to support RLOs and refugee-led initiatives to scale up their pro bono projects, and the development of regional plans of actions. The impact of the pledge is far-reaching: over **100 new legal partnerships** were created, **9 RLOs** have been able to scale up a wide variety of pro bono projects which were matched with law firms, unlocking millions of dollars’ worth of legal services. Remarkably, in 2020, over **165,000 hours of free legal assistance** were provided by members of the network, surpassing their initial commitment by 30 per cent.

#### [2020 Progress Report](#)



Participants discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of newcomer women in a forum organized by New Women Connectors and Global Refugee-Led Network.



© NEW WOMEN CONNECTORS

## Meaningful refugee participation



PLEDGING ENTITY

Global Refugee-Led Network (RLOs in the Americas, Europe, Africa, Middle East and North Africa and the Asia Pacific)



PLEDGE

Support the meaningful participation of refugees and host communities in decisions that affect their lives

In 2021, GRN launched [Refugee Skill Up](#) – a series of capacity-building workshops, including on refugee rights and policies, leadership and organizational skills, fundraising and campaign strategies. So far, training was delivered to over **100 RLOs**, providing participants with the necessary tools to replicate initiatives in their own communities. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, when traditional humanitarian actors faced travel restrictions and severe capacity limitations, RLOs and refugee-led networks filled the gap and provided life-saving assistance to refugee and host communities. For instance, the European Regional Chapter of GRN developed the “[Vaccine4All, All4Vaccine](#)” campaign to ensure everyone has equal access to vaccine without discrimination, and that everyone has access to accurate information in their native language to increase vaccine acceptance. Similarly, in response to the Afghanistan humanitarian crisis, the Asia Pacific Chapter of GRN, many of whose members fled Afghanistan in the 1990s and had vital insights into the dangerous journeys involved, facilitated a hotline to provide legal aid, psychological counselling and other assistance to Afghans in need. GRN also connected with other RLO networks and provided valuable feedback on meaningful refugee participation at various platforms following the Forum, which in turn helps inform follow-up activities as well as planning for the next GRF in 2023.

.../... Meaningful refugee participation



PLEDGING ENTITY

European Council on Refugees and Exiles (105 NGOs)



PLEDGE

- Increase inclusion of refugees throughout all ECRE's work
- Advocate for rights-based European asylum policy

ECRE has exceeded its commitments for refugees to make up **20 per cent of its staff members** and other decision-making bodies, aiming to further increase to 35 per cent by the next GRF. Various trainings were organized throughout 2020 and 2021 to engage RLOs in advocacy at the EU level. Equally important, ECRE's advocacy campaigns in collaboration with RLOs also garnered significant attention: the #YourVoteOurFuture campaign, which

aimed to mobilize progressive votes for the 2019 European Parliament elections, reached some **1 million people** through social media, press and events; while the ongoing #HardlyRocketScience campaign to protect the fundamental rights of asylum seekers under the European Pact on Migration and Asylum mobilized 60 organizations including RLOs to join forces.



Members of ECRE at the European Parliament election campaign in 2019 in Brussels

## Protection and inclusion of people with specific needs



PLEDGING ENTITY

**Queer Sisterhood Project (RLO)**



PLEDGE

**Ensure policy accompaniment to strengthen adjudication of asylum claims; enhance the understanding of the claims related to the persecution of LGBTIQ+ persons**

At the GRF, of 12 pledges made in relation to “LGBTIQ+” populations, only four specifically addressed this group, of which three were made by civil society. Queer Sisterhood Project – the first RLO in Australia to dedicate its work to the issues of LGBTIQ+ forced displacement - is among one of them. Progress on their pledge was made through a whole range of activities such as training and support guidance, with the aim of strengthening service design and capacity to meet the specific needs of forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ people. In 2020 and 2021, Queer Sisterhood Project organized training and professional development on LGBTIQ+ forced displacement issues for

a number of government institutions, universities and other actors. In addition, in partnership with Migration Council of Australia and several LGBTIQ+ organizations, they developed a free online [training module](#)

to allow any stakeholder working on providing social, health or legal support to gain understanding on the lived experience and human rights challenges of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people.

[Training module to work with LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people](#)



**Building service capacity to work with LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people**

Certificate of Achievement

4 hours English

**SIGN UP AS NEW STUDENT**

Already started the course? [Sign in](#)



.../... Protection and inclusion of people with specific needs



PLEDGING ENTITY

International Disability Alliance (14 NGOs, RLOs and networks)



PLEDGE

Strengthen the capacity of organizations of people with disabilities for effective mainstreaming of the rights of refugees with disabilities

As a step taken towards the implementation of their pledge, International Disability Alliance (IDA) concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR in December 2020. One of the areas of collaboration is capacity building, including through the development of training materials in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the delivery of inclusive training sessions for IDA members and UNHCR staff. IDA members and UNHCR have also identified three countries to pilot the implementation of the pledge in a focused way, and jointly established [a fact sheet on disability, displacement and climate change](#). At the regional and national levels, IDA members are implementing various projects to advance their commitments. The European Disability Forum developed a [toolkit](#) that provides information and practical guidance on inclusion of refugees with disabilities, which was translated into 10 languages, including sign language. In Turkey, psychological counselling was delivered to nearly **10,000 people with disabilities** with the support of local civil society organizations, while in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, Rohingya refugees with disabilities are included in the community groups alongside with volunteers without disabilities.

[Toolkit on the inclusion of refugees with disabilities](#)



## 2. Education



### PLEDGING ENTITY

Jesuit Worldwide Learning (FBOs, NGOs, companies, and academic institutions)



### PLEDGE

- Provide internationally-accredited Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Development via blended learning
- Support English language assessment, language acquisition and bridge support to national higher education of refugees
- Train teachers in digital learning facilitation, peace leadership and sports facilitation to promote social cohesion

Despite interruptions to in-person learning due to COVID-19, Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) has made significant progress on its pledge to support potential students to pursue further higher education and provide training to teachers. In particular, around 180 refugee students in Africa and Middle East and North Africa region received scholarships to pursue internationally-accredited Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Development - a subject that has proven to be of great relevance in the current refugee settings. Furthermore, recognizing English language skills as a major barrier for refugees, internally displaced and stateless people to acquire higher education, JWL delivered the Global English Language programme online to **nearly 1,000 students**. JWL is also committed to delivering professional courses to teachers, especially in digital learning facilitation, peace leadership and sports facilitation. **Over 500 teachers** enrolled in the courses, surpassing the initial enrolment forecast. JWL is also a founding member of the [Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium](#), a multi-stakeholder consortium that works to extend educational access to refugees, internally displaced and stateless people worldwide.

.../... Education



PLEDGING ENTITY

Save the Children (NGO)



PLEDGE

- Increase the quality of provision of early learning and early childhood development through programming, research and advocacy
- Expand the Return to Learning programme
- Increase the capacity and improve the working conditions of refugee and host community teachers so they can teach effectively
- Advocate for greater investment, and better planning and coordination in education in emergencies
- Support the inclusion of refugees, including the most marginalized, into the national education system

Save the Children has made remarkable **7 pledges in Education**, making significant progress through their programming, research and advocacy. Their evidence-based “[Ready to Learn](#)” programme, aimed at getting forcibly displaced children back to learning within 90 days of their displacement, has reached over **77,000 refugee and host community children** in nine crisis responses since its pilot in 2018. Their “Enabling Teacher” package, designed to increase the capacity of teachers to deliver quality education to refugees, was delivered together with a set of guidance and training, allowing teachers to tailor the needs of students in the local contexts. Since 2019, Save the Children’s [Education in Emergencies Professional Development Programme](#) has delivered in-person blended training to more than **3,700 people** and **411 practitioners** across West and Central Africa, East and Southern Africa and the Middle East have done in-person blended training. Efforts were also made in terms of research, including the “[Build Forward Better](#)” report which calls for greater preparedness and anticipatory action in education systems in emergencies, or the “[Save our Education](#)” report which analyses the impact of COVID-19 on education including for refugees. Crucially, Save the Children’s continued engagement in a number of multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, Education Cannot Wait, Secondary Education Working Group, has contributed to greater awareness, investment and integration of education into all humanitarian responses.

[Building Forward Better](#)



[Save our Education](#)



# 3. Statelessness



**PLEDGING ENTITY**  
 European Network on  
 Statelessness (170+ NGOs and  
 individuals)



**PLEDGE**  
 Expand the Statelessness Index  
 across Europe



To encourage action to fill the protection gaps faced by stateless people, European Network on Statelessness (ENS) developed the [Statelessness Index](#)— an online comparative tool with information on statelessness law, policy, and practice in 27 European countries. The Index benchmarks countries’ performance against the international conventions on statelessness that they have signed up to, helping to encourage necessary law reform by highlighting both gaps and good practices. Pledging to expand the Statelessness Index at the GRF, ENS has held a series of webinars and launched a series of thematic briefings in 2020 and 2021, bringing together over 500 stakeholders in total. Efforts are underway to translate country profiles in order to make the content more accessible for actors working at national level. Despite challenges to access country information and the resources required to maintain and update the Index, it has been possible to add six new country profiles since the 2019 GRF. Three further profiles will go live in early 2022, as the next milestone towards ENS fulfilling its pledge to cover two thirds of Council of Europe Member States by 2023.



## 4. Solutions

### Support platforms (MIRPS, SSAR and IGAD)

The three support platforms – Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (known by its Spanish acronym MIRPS) in Central America and Mexico, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in East and Horn of Africa and Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) – were launched as responsibility-sharing mechanisms to reinforce regional refugee responses at the 2019 GRF. Civil society organizations have contributed to the support platforms through the provision of financial, material and technical investments. This support has played an important role in promoting self-reliance in the countries of asylum and creating an enabling environment for the safe, sustainable and voluntary return and re-integration of refugees, internally displaced people and other affected communities.

*Launch of the support platform for Afghanistan at 2019 Global Refugee Forum.*





**Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (14 NGOs)**



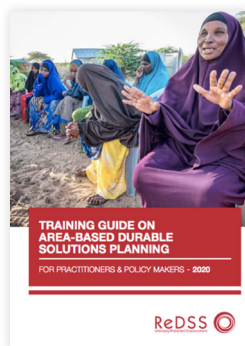
**Advance multi-stakeholder engagement to sustain solutions locally, nationally and regionally in the East and Horn of Africa**

Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) has pledged towards durable solutions for displaced populations in East and Horn of Africa through development of an evidence base and support of local initiatives on durable solutions. To this end, ReDSS, in partnership with governments, UN agencies and other civil society organizations, developed an assessment [tool](#) to measure local integration in Somalia. Building on the Inter-Agency framework for Durable Solutions and combined with localized concepts of integration, the tool has enabled greater participation of the displaced populations in the decision-making on durable solutions interventions, and better coordination and greater

accountability amongst all stakeholders. In addition, central to ReDSS approach is the support of local initiatives, including through the centralization of a database of local durable solutions, and the development and delivery of [an area-based durable solutions planning training package](#). These activities have helped build capacity of local

actors in stakeholder mapping and programming, encourage joint programmes and link durable solutions programmes with district development plans. This has resulted in better use of resources, better targeting of activities, reduced duplication and coordinated actions toward durable solutions.

[Area-based durable solutions planning training package](#)



## Resettlement and complementary pathways



PLEDGING ENTITY

RefugePoint (NGO)



PLEDGE

Provide resettlement and complementary pathways casework capacity in priority situations in Africa and the Middle East and ensure availability of resettlement and complementary pathways to refugees

In 2020, RefugePoint and its partners supported over **6,500 refugees** to relocate to safety. RefugePoint is working with UNHCR, Shapiro Foundation and other partners to identify refugees in Ethiopia who may be eligible for scholarships and education visas to Italy. RefugePoint is one of the founding partners of the [Central Mediterranean Family Reunification project](#), UNHCR’s first programme dedicated to reuniting separated refugee families through pathways other than resettlement. To date, the programme has helped **900 refugees** pursue family reunification, over 100 have already been reunited with their families. Similarly, **125 skilled refugees and their families** in Kenya were supported to emigrate to Canada to fill critical labor shortages there through the [Economic Mobility Pathways Project](#).

[RefugePoint’s analysis of 2018-2020 resettlement data](#)



.../... Resettlement and complementary pathways



PLEDGING ENTITY

Talent Beyond Boundaries (NGO)



PLEDGE

- Expand its work to open labour mobility pathways for displaced people by enhancing assistance to refugees and other displaced people
- Assist organizations, institutions, and businesses to build their capacity to assist refugees in mobility pathways.

At the GRF, Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) and its partners made four pledges, committing to open labor mobility pathways for displaced people into new destination countries. Since then, TBB has advanced on implementing their pledge by undertaking a mapping exercise of the skills and employability of at least **20,000 refugee profiles** to secure business interest in recruiting refugees from abroad. In order to meet the employer demand and scale up their solution, TBB is working with a wide range of actors, including local recruitment services, industry groups, RLOs, civil leaders and local settlement agencies. Efforts are ongoing to support refugees and displaced population to use labour pathways to move to Australia, Canada and the UK. As of July 2021, TBB secured a durable solution through labour mobility for **163 refugees**, including candidates and their families. The average salary of TBB candidates abroad is **USD\$ 46,000**.

# 5. Jobs and livelihoods



PLEDGING ENTITY

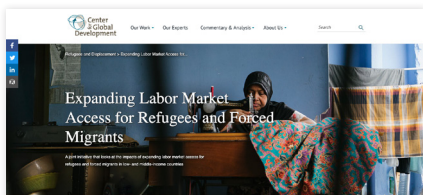
Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative  
(25+ NGOs, FBOs, RLOs, States,  
foundations, research institutions)



PLEDGE

Promote refugee self-reliance through  
measurement, programming, and advocacy

[Project Expanding Labor  
Market Access to Refugees  
and Forced Migration](#)



In May 2020, Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI) launched the [Self-Reliance Index](#) (SRI) - the first global tool to measure the progress of refugee families on their paths to self-reliance. Currently, 21 agencies in 14 countries are actively using the SRI and have collectively assessed **over 5,000 households** to design and provide effective programmes and services for refugees. Additionally, RSRI members implemented a wide range of self-reliance programmes, ranging from holistic case-management programmes, the Graduation Approach to asset transfers and education support, reaching around **150,000 refugees**, displaced populations and host community members in **19 countries**. RSRI members are also undertaking research that is contributing to a growing base of evidence on pathways to refugee self-reliance. Notable projects include a [self-reliance evidence assessment](#) undertaken by Danish Refugee Council and RefugePoint, as well as the Centre for Global Development and Refugees International [joint initiative](#) exploring the impacts of expanding labor market access for refugees and migrants in low- and middle-income countries.

.../... Jobs and livelihoods



PLEDGING ENTITY

Poverty Alleviation Coalition (13 NGOs, led by UNHCR & the Partnership of Economic Inclusion (World Bank))



PLEDGE

End extreme poverty for 160,000 households in 26 countries by 2023 using the Graduation Approach

The Coalition has set an ambitious goal of alleviating poverty of 500,000 households consisting of refugees and nationals in 35 countries within 5 years through increasing self-reliance. To this end, the Coalition is implementing the [Graduation Approach](#), a poverty alleviation model developed by Bangladesh Rural & Advancement Committee (BRAC) in 8 countries. Civil society plays an important role in the Coalition, being the implementing actor of the Graduation Approach on the ground. In Uganda, for instance, Trickle Up is providing expertise toward improving food security and nutrition, and building self-reliance and resilience for **13,200 individuals**, 75 per cent of whom are women and youth from extremely poor households. At the same time, Danish Refugee Council has adapted the Graduation Approach to enhance self-reliance of **25,000 Syrian refugee and host community youth** in Jordan. Their programmes in five countries – Jordan, Iraq, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger target over **5,500 households**. To date, PAC has reached over **37 per cent of its pledge to target 160,000 households** by 2023. Civil society, together with UN agencies, governments and other actors, are working to scale up the Graduation Approach in 35 countries.

A Congolese refugee living in Kampala, Uganda, started a sewing business after joining an IRC-supported local savings programme



© IRC/ANDREW OBERSTADT

.../... Jobs and livelihoods



PLEDGING ENTITY

International Rescue Committee (NGO)



PLEDGE

- Develop financial strategies deployed by forcibly displaced persons through research and policy influence
- Progress the roadmap to the sustainable and responsible financial inclusion of forcibly displaced persons

Out of the 10 pledges that International Rescue Committee (IRC) contributed at the GRF, **seven of them focused on Jobs and Livelihoods**. In 2020, IRC and research partners published a [policy briefing](#) analyzing refugee’s economic opportunities, financial services and digital inclusion in the face of COVID-19, which resulted in two programmes in Kampala and rural Uganda. The first programme in rural Uganda provided **600 refugees and host community members** with financial literacy training, agricultural training and support with tools, access to farmlands and acquiring agricultural loans. The other programme will be implemented in 2022, focusing on a new model of apprenticeship training. IRC, along with Germany and the International Labour Organization (ILO), is also working to advance their pledge on developing and implementing the [roadmap to the sustainable and responsible financial inclusion of displaced persons](#), which offers a set of key policy recommendations for relevant stakeholder groups, with the aim to addressing the gaps in access to financial services for the forcibly displaced. The roadmap has propelled the formation of a Task team to address the barriers related to money laundering and financing of terrorism that are typically faced by displaced populations. The roadmap has been successfully implemented at the country level in Rwanda, Mauritania and Afghanistan, and is entering the second phase.

## 6. Responsibility sharing arrangements



### PLEDGING ENTITY

Lutheran World Federation, Islamic Relief Worldwide, HIAS



### PLEDGE

Invite a diverse range of grassroots faith actors from refugee-hosting and third-country resettlement contexts to an international conference before the second GRF

FBOs have comparative advantages in carrying out advocacy activities and implementing responsibility sharing commitments on the ground, thanks to their global reach and representation on the ground. A significant effort by FBOs to enhancing responsibility sharing arrangements is the joint pledge “[Welcoming the stranger, shaping a more hopeful future](#)” made by Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) and HIAS. To strengthen faith-based responses to the world’s unprecedented refugee crisis, the three agencies have committed to organizing a conference with grassroots faith leaders working to welcome refugees worldwide. A diverse range of grassroots faith actors from refugee hosting and third-country resettlement contexts will be invited, with the aim to fostering greater dialogue and building connections between grassroots and global actors,

while exploring how to enable supportive environments for local actors to carry out protection and peace building work to support refugees. The conference was originally submitted as a joint pledge of IRW and LWF to the 2019 GRF, and was due to be held in Germany in October 2020. The COVID-19 led to its postponement, which has now allowed for HIAS to join the pledge as an official co-sponsor. In the lead up to the conference, IRW, LWF and HIAS have been working closely with other FBOs to organize regional consultations with a broad group of grassroots faith communities, networks and organizations in areas affected by mass displacement.



# 7. Energy and infrastructure



PLEDGING ENTITY

**Global campaign: Clean Energy Challenge (250+ entities, including States, private companies, NGOs, academic institutions, UN agencies)**



PLEDGE

**Accept UNHCR’s Clean Energy Challenge and support the ambition that “all refugee settlements and nearby host communities will have access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy by 2030”**

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Mercy Corps together with States, UN agencies and other civil society organizations jointly pledged to accept UNHCR’s Clean Energy Challenge. Steps taken towards the pledge included providing expertise, designing and implementing inclusive energy programmes with livelihoods and climate action components. With their energy expertise in humanitarian settings, NORCAP Energy Expert Roster deployed by NRC has been supporting humanitarian organizations in Kenya, South Sudan, Senegal, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Egypt and Burundi to change the way they use energy. NORCAP has also continued to provide climate information services such as weather and seasonal forecasts to vulnerable

populations. Various environmental initiatives are being implemented by NRC, including the “[Greening the Orange](#)” in Mankien, South Sudan, aimed at replacing diesel generators with solar power. The use of new solar systems significantly reduces the lengthy and expensive transport of fossil fuels to hard-to-reach areas where humanitarian actors often operate, thus freeing up funds that can be directed to those who need it the most. Similarly, Mercy Corps is implementing two projects in Bidibdi refugee resettlement in Uganda: [AMPERE](#) and Journey to Scale, aiming to bridge demand and offer of quality solar products for the settlement, while creating job opportunities for refugees. These projects have proven successful and will be scaled up.

## Annex 1

# List of Abbreviations

<b>ACSG</b>	Asylum Capacity Support Group
<b>AGD</b>	Age, Gender, Diversity
<b>FBO</b>	Faith-based organization
<b>GCR</b>	Global Compact on Refugees
<b>GRF</b>	Global Refugee Forum
<b>HLOM</b>	High-Level Officials Meeting
<b>IGAD</b>	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>LGBTIQ+</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
<b>MIRPS</b>	Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>POC</b>	Persons of concern
<b>RLO</b>	Refugee-led organization
<b>SSAR</b>	Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# WHERE WE STAND

## STOCKTAKING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLEDGES MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY AT THE 2019 GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM

December 2021

Cover photo:  
A group of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced women at a retreat  
organized by the Forcibly Displaced People Network.

© FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE NETWORK

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