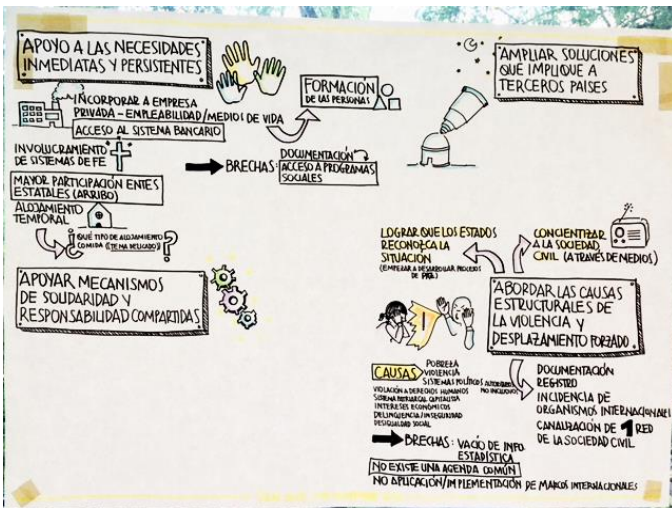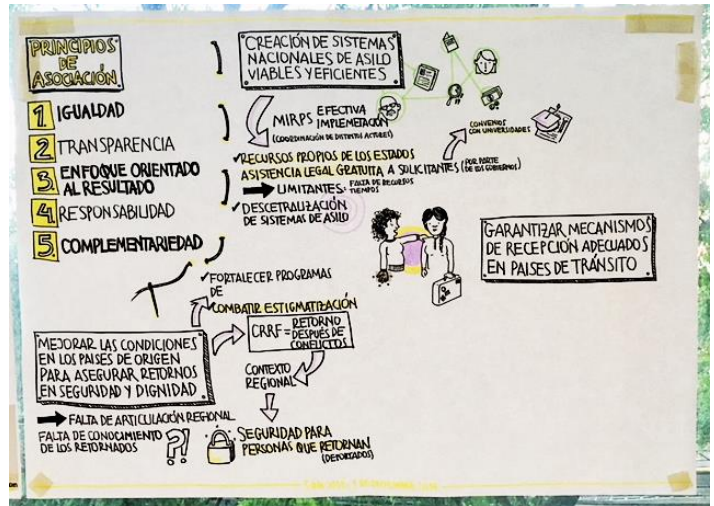# Multi-stakeholder Workshop: Towards an understanding and application of the 'whole-of-society approach'

With Support from U.S. BPRM

1. Background Information

The workshop held in Costa Rica in December 2017 was the first in a series of meetings focused on the concept of the 'whole-of-society approach', as articulated in the CRRF roll-out processes and the discussions on the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Based on ICVA's experience in implementing, with the UNHCR Partnership Section, the UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Structured Dialogue linked to the Principles of Partnership, those workshops aim to:

- share, through presentations and plenary discussions, information on the CRRF roll-out, the GCR and on how actors can contribute to the process;
- strengthen common analysis and understanding of the meaning of the 'whole-of-society approach' and whether/how this concept might be operationalized in various contexts for improved comprehensive refugee responses;
- generate, through thematic discussions in small groups, context specific, realistic and practical recommendations to improve joint, multi-stakeholder, work on comprehensive refugee responses.
- contribute to reflections shaping the Global Compact on Refugees, its implementation and follow-up.

Those workshops are meant to be organized at a regional or country level in 2017 and 2018, thanks to support provided by the he United States Bureau of Population, Migration and Refugees (BPRM).

Using the 'Structured Dialogue' methodology intends to provide a space to foster candid conversations between NGOs, UNHCR, and possibly other actors, in the multi-stakeholder spirit of the 2016 New York Declaration.

This first workshop was organized in Costa Rica, at a regional level, in the context of follow-up activities to the San Pedro Sula conference of 26 October 2017, which launched the regional CRRF process in Central America, the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework or *MIRPS* (*Marco Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones*).[1]

The workshop was particularly held in conjunction with a conference organized by Asylum Access, with contributions from the UNHCR Bureau for the Americas, *the High-Level Round Table: A Latino American response for the human rights guarantee of refugees and migrants: From commitments to results* (in Spanish, *La Mesa de Alto Nivel Una respuesta latinoamericana para la garantía de los derechos humanos de las personas refugiadas y migrantes: De compromisos a resultados)*. The High-Level Roundtable provided a space for developing reflections to address the situations of refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations in the region. Two other High-Level Roundtables had been organized ahead and after the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, with the purpose of developing responses applicable in the regional context.[2]

2. Participation and Methodology

The workshop gathered about 40 participants, working with NGOs, governmental institutions, the private sector, academia and UNHCR. Participants originated from 8 different countries in the region.[3]

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[1] For information and documents in English and Spanish on the MIRPS, including the text of the San Pedro Sula Declaration, see: http://www.mirps-hn.org
[2] Those High-Level Roundtables were organized in Bogotá, Colombia (13-14 October 2016) and Quito, Ecuador (20-21 April 2017).
[3] See Annex I for details.

The workshop facilitators – Jerome Elie and Sophie Helle from ICVA and Tiziana Clerico from the UNHCR Partnership Section – attended the High-Level Roundtable to get acquainted with the region specificities, partnership challenges and gaps in the region. This informed the approach and themes discussed during the 'whole-of-society' workshop.

3. Plenary Sessions

Pre-workshop questionnaires, in comparison with previous 'Structured Dialogue' meetings, revealed an already fair knowledge about the Principles of Partnership. This may be explained by the fact that many of the NGO participants had taken part in the San Salvador Regional Structured Dialogue workshop of November 2016. Overall, the questionnaires highlighted a strong commitment and desire from participants to improve partnership among a variety of actors involved in the MIRPS roll-out.[4]

The facilitators opened the workshop by explaining the rationale and methodology, ensuring adhesion to the overall workshop objectives, namely to discuss and strengthen collaboration between different actors involved in the MIRPS roll-out, on the basis of the Principles of Partnership (equality, transparency, results-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity).

As such, the workshop's introduction was also an opportunity to go refresh participants' knowledge about the global processes linked to the New York Declaration, including the CRRF roll-out in two regions (Central America and East Africa)[5]; the roadmap to develop the Global Compact on Refugees[6] (particularly relevant since this workshop was organized just prior to the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges), and importantly, the 'whole-of-society approach' concept.

3.1. The 'whole-of-society approach'

ICVA introduced reflections, highlighting that the 'whole-of-society approach' is considered as a key pillar of the CRRF. Although the phrase itself does not appear in the document, the New York Declaration highlighted that addressing large movements of refugees is a global collective responsibility and referred to the centrality of multi-stakeholder approaches, dialogues, and alliances. Partnership is therefore at the centre of the new way of working on refugee issues, which require collective, inclusive and concerted approaches to deliver more sustainable and predictable responses. In this perspective, ICVA considers that the five Principles of Partnership are a useful basis to further develop a practical 'whole-of-society approach', particularly through the MIRPS implementation.

This introduction also indicated that, since September 2016, global reflections on the 'whole-of-society approach' have highlighted three main objectives:

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[4] See more details in Annex II.
[5] For more details on the CRRF roll-out, see UNHCR's 'CRRF Portal' : http://crrf.unhcr.org/en/
[6] Presentation based on UNHCR's developed roadmap *Towards a global compact on refugees: a roadmap*.

1) mobilize new/additional actors (development actors, financial institutions, private sector), based on the premise that humanitarian action alone cannot resolve humanitarian crises.
2) reinforce a whole-of-government approach, looking to develop integrated government responses and reaching out to new governmental interlocutors.
3) include refugees and host communities in decision-making, planning and implementation.

However, a clear and practical understanding of what a 'whole-of-society' approach entails is yet to be developed, taking regional, national, and local specificities. It remains important to reflect on the principles and structures most likely to capitalize on the value-added and complementarities between actors; seize opportunities while mitigating risks; and ensure that the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts.

In this perspective, the workshop intended to discuss with a variety of actors their views about and understanding of the 'whole-of-society approach'; how it may already be implemented; what could be done to strengthen this approach through the MIRPS roll-out.
During the exchange with participants, workshop facilitators noted that the phrase 'whole-of-society' may not have an established translation in Spanish, despite obvious strong pre-existing multi-stakeholder approaches in the region. Indeed, in the Americas, refugee responses tend to involve 'unusual' actors when compared to other regions (e.g. human rights institutions). This seemed to indicate that the 'whole-of-society approach' can build on existing practices, provided this brings added value and go beyond semantics about partnership approaches.

4. Discussion on priority areas and proposed actions

To further engage in the reflection around the specificity of a 'whole-of-society approach' in the region and what could be done collectively to bring improvements, participants were asked to select among a menu of MIRPS related themes to be addressed through group discussions:

1. Creation of viable and efficient national asylum systems	2. Ensure adequate reception mechanisms in transit countries	3. Improve conditions in countries of origin to ensure returns in security and dignity
4. Support for immediate and ongoing needs	5. Expand third country solutions	6. Work jointly to improve solidarity and responsibility-sharing at all levels
	7. Address structural causes of violence and forced displacement	

Participants decided to focus on themes 1, 3, 4, and 7. The below highlights the main suggestions to address identified gaps and challenges through a 'whole-of-society approach'. The outcomes of each breakout group are a mix of different levels addressed during the discussions, reflecting the diversity of the composition of each group.

4.1. Creation of viable and efficient national asylum systems

GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Participants indicated that, with the rapid and important increase of asylum requests across the region, the **system is tested to its limits and at risk of collapsing**. In some situations, it can take up to 3 or 4 years to have a request processed, creating important backlogs and associated uncertainties and vulnerabilities for asylum-seekers. Asylum systems in the region have not yet managed to face this challenge and find ways to maintain the space and institution of asylum. Increased collective reflection and action might bring additionalities in this effort. Participants also pointed that it si in nobody's interest to have have individuals waiting on a decision left in limbo in terms of access to documentation, information and services.

There is, however, often an important obstacle linked to a **lack of good quality information-sharing** among actors (governments, NGOs, academia) involved in the asylum sector. This is generally due to a lack of capacity, but also to a **lack of effective coordination among actors** to ensure sustainability of actions (e.g. implementation of the MINARE's 64 concrete action agreements in Costa Rica would benefit from increased coordination).

In addition, participants considered that overall, current asylum systems **do not provide enough visibility to affected populations**. They considered that their voice needs to be taken into account in the partnership approach, at national and regional level. Viable and efficient asylum systems can contribute to this, by ensuring legal recognition to individuals in a timely manner. Participants took this opportunity to note that, although the process leading to the San Pedro Sula conference had featured national level multi-stakeholder consultations with participation from persons of concern and affected populations, there was uncertainty as to whether such approaches would be maintained and/or expanded in the MIRPS implementation phase. This remark being relevant to developments linked to asylum systems as well as other MIRPS elements.

Last but not least, participants highlighted the impact of **lack of resources**, although recognizing that availability of resources does not guarantee effective work.

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE GROUP DISCUSSION

❖ **Coordinated free public defence**: The example of Costa Rica was highlighted to indicate how free legal defence can work, particularly involving collaborations between *pro bono* lawyers, academia, and international organizations. Such

> support can help speed-up asylum procedures and allow for a faster access to rights and justice.
> ❖ **Partnerships can help make migration-related documents accessible with gratuity, opportunity and effectiveness**. This can ensure quality information and access to services. An important element is to improve coordination of information dissemination.
> ❖ **Strengthen capacities** of entities in charge of the asylum system, looking at how partnerships can bring additionality.

4.2. Improve conditions in the countries of origin to ensure returns in security and dignity

GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Participants first reminded that the specificities of the Central American context had to be kept in mind. Probably more than in any other region, returns and conditions in countries of origin are often affected by factors beyond armed conflict, including high levels of criminality, lack of state capacity and services and governance dimensions. For example, **weak protection and civil registration systems** in origin countries were singled out as important obstacles. In particular, **lack of birth registration or personal documents** can worsen conditions in countries of origin, negatively affecting the possibility of ensuring sustainable returns in security and dignity. Of course, insecurity in many areas also calls for caution with regard to returns and indicates that multi-staekholder projects need to be enhanced, for example to ensure the creation of safe spaces for returnees.

Participants also felt an important impediment in improving conditions in countries of origin is linked to a **lack of space for articulation between governments and key actors** such as the *Conferencia Regional sobre Migración* and the *Red Regional de Organizaciones Civiles para las Migraciones*. Such actors could better exchange information and analyses on contexts, conditions and necessary assitance to ensure proper returns.

Furthermore, discussions showed that in many countries, language used in the media may contribute to the **stigmatization of returnees** and bring ambiguity. In particular, in public discourse, deportees can be associated to criminals and there is a lack of understanding about protection dimensions. This complex reality deserves collective work for improved understanding.

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE GROUP DISCUSSION

> ❖ Take a **structural approach and identify the different actors** from the various sectors involved in reception and reintegration (justice and development sectors, NGOs, etc.).[7] Such a mapping exercise of actors often appears as a logical first step

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[7] Participants in this group identified the following actors from different sectors: Development actors include public ministries, local development associations, local governments, development banks, UNDP, etc.; In the justice and security sector, actors would be composed of the Ministry of Justice, defensoria publica, prosecutor, DGME (Dirección General de Migración Extanjera), and PNC (Policía Nacional Civil); In terms civil society actors, NGOs, CBOs and churches would be included.

in any 'whole-of-society approach'.
- ❖ **Train and sensitize** those in charge of receiving returnees on process and rights in order to guarantee adequate approach and infrastructures (such as safe spaces) are in place for the reception of returnees.
- ❖ **Organize awareness campaigns** with communication media about deportations and migrants and **develop guidelines to deal with migration issues and combat stigmatization**. Participants particularly pointed to the Argentina example, where some NGOs are working with the media on terminologies to ensure ambiguous and stigmatizing vocabulary is avoided.

4.3. Support for immediate and ongoing needs

GAPS AND CHALLENGES

The group working in this theme primarily identified factors acting as **obstacles to refugees' access to assistance** but also to developing their **self-reliance and resilience through inclusion** into the socio-economic fabric of the host country. Indeed, participants stressed that sustainability of meeting ongoing needs is often hampered by a lack of **financial autonomy and management.**

This is compounded by lack of structures, initiatives and projects and resources to foster socio-economic inclusion despite the recognized value-added this can have for the attainment of any durable solution. Participants pointed to the **potential of tapping into public-private partnerships, the civil society fabric and social capital** in host countries to make progress.

Participants also remarked that **information on services available and self-reliance options** for new arrivals (and even in the longer term) is often difficult to come by. It is also not always clear that assistance is granted on **the basis of vulnerability**, given the focus on eligibility and documentation (which might be partly explained by limited resources that do not allow to cover all persons in need).

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE GROUP DISCUSSION

- ❖ A multi-stakeholder approach would particularly be fruitful in **fostering socio-economic inclusion**. Engaging with private companies, MTSS (Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social), financial and civil society institutions should enhance support and training to **foster livelihoods opportunity and employability.**
- ❖ Further engaging local governments, faith-based institutions, development projects, hostels (*albergues*), as well as host communities themselves in the **orientation and information sharing for newly arrived** refugees and migrants would help in the **integration process**.
- ❖ Similarly, **Harmonization of documentation** for nationals and foreigners would avoid parallel systems and ease access to services and work for refugees.

4.4. Address structural causes of violence and forced displacement

Participants recalled that countries in the region still present high levels of violence and insecurity, manifested through various forms (especially organised crime) and affecting many interests, groups and individuals. **Violence is often a cause of displacement and an obstacle to inclusion and reintegration**. It is therefore fundamental to address structural causes to ensure improved protection and the realization of solutions.

NGOs particularly stressed that the current situation represents **primarily a protection crisis**, with current policies failing to tackle the root causes of violence while often having negative consequences on the general population's ability to fulfil their rights, access mobility and development. Lack of national and regional statistical information on the matter, also makes it extremely difficult to develop evidence-based approaches and to record human rights violations.

Overall, in addressing those structural causes, there is **not enough coordination and collaboration between the various relevant actors**, causing efficiency issues and hampering addressing linkages between local, national and regional levels. The **role of human rights institutions** in forced displacement matters represents both a regional specificity and an area that should be strengthened.

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE GROUP DISCUSSION

- ❖ There is a need for more systematized and accurate **documentation, as well as quantitative and qualitative record of cases** of violence and human rights violation in countries of origin and transit. This could be done at regional and international levels by actors such as UN agencies, international organizations, NGOs and their relevant networks, as well as the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). OCAM (Comisión Centro Americana de direcciones de migración) could also share the existing information, and help in further collection.
- ❖ Currently, **civil society and human rights institutions often fill protection and assistance gaps on an *ad hoc* basis**. Closer **collaboration and strategic synergies** with UN protection actors and state institutions would improve efficiency. This could first be based on institutionalized information sharing of information and analysis on the extent and effects of violence as well as protection needs.
- ❖ To further **take the public space, advocate** and increase the visibility of violence-related displacement challenges, **common positions among civil society organisations are need**. This could be done through consolidating an existing **regional civil society network** or developing institutional synergies between

> various networks.[8] Some practical factors may need to be looked into, such as the level of representation among different countries and a coordination mechanism with governments.

5. Conclusion and Takeaways

This workshop highlighted some key reflections on the 'whole-of-society approach' and how this can contribute to refugee responses in the specific Central American context and through the MIRPS roll-out at national, regional and international level. Overall, the workshop facilitators drew the following general considerations[9]:

❖ Although the phrase 'whole-of-society approach' is hardly used in the region, the concept of including a multiplicity of actors, beyond traditional civil society, governmental and UN actors is understood and applied. In particular, a number of relevant projects involving the private sector and human rights organizations were discussed. Moreover, plenary discussions highlighted that actors involved in peace processes and transitional justice should not be forgotten.

❖ More should be done, however, to strengthen strategic thinking about multi-stakeholder collaboration to ensure partners can go beyond and capitalize on *ad hoc* projects and initiatives. Those should be linked to sustainable, institutionalized strategies, based on joint analysis and exchange of information. Leadership by resourced institutions might be needed in this perspective. Interestingly, however, the discussions did not consider whether structures needed to be set-up at regional and/or national level to embody the 'whole-of-society approach'. This can be seen as a capacity to avoid getting stuck on debates over architecture (e.g. CRRF secretariats) although not necessarily answering the need for some form of sustainable approach.

❖ The workshop highlighted similar basic diagnoses and solutions encountered by ICVA in previous Structured Dialogue workshops, e.g. the need to develop mapping of relevant actors; develop systems and tools to share information and learn from others' experiences/practices; improve communication and coordination so as to develop common objectives and outcomes. There is eagerness to work in complementarity, which hinges on those elements.

❖ Participants also shared two sets of concerns about the MIRPS roll-out: 1) They recognized multi-stakeholder efforts developed in the lead-up to the San Pedro Sula conference, especially through national consultations but wondered whether such approaches would now be translated into the implementation and monitoring phase and how; 2) Participants worried about the current political climate in the region, often characterized by instability and with elections coming up in different countries.

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[8] NGO networks discussed during the workshop (and involved in the MIRPS) included the *Grupo Articulador Regional del Plan de Acción Brasil* (GAR-PAB); the *Grupo Regional de Trabajo sobre Riesgo, Emergencias y Desastres para América Latina y el Caribe*(REDLAC); and the *Red Regional de Organizaciones Civiles para las Migraciones* (RROCM).

[9] Annex III also provides an overview of participants evaluations after the workshop.
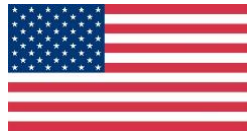
❖ Finally, it is noteworthy that the discussions considered only tangentially issues related to regional and global responsibility-sharing (possibly because there were no participants from outside the region). There were also no discussions on possible efforts at preparedness in the region, although a participant indicated that the MIRPS roll-out could benefit from increased attention to this theme.
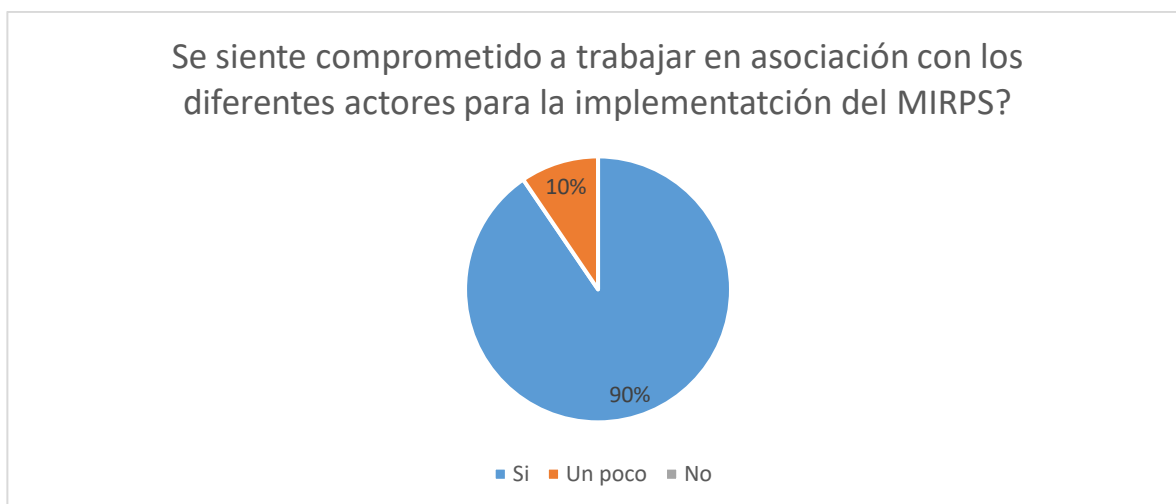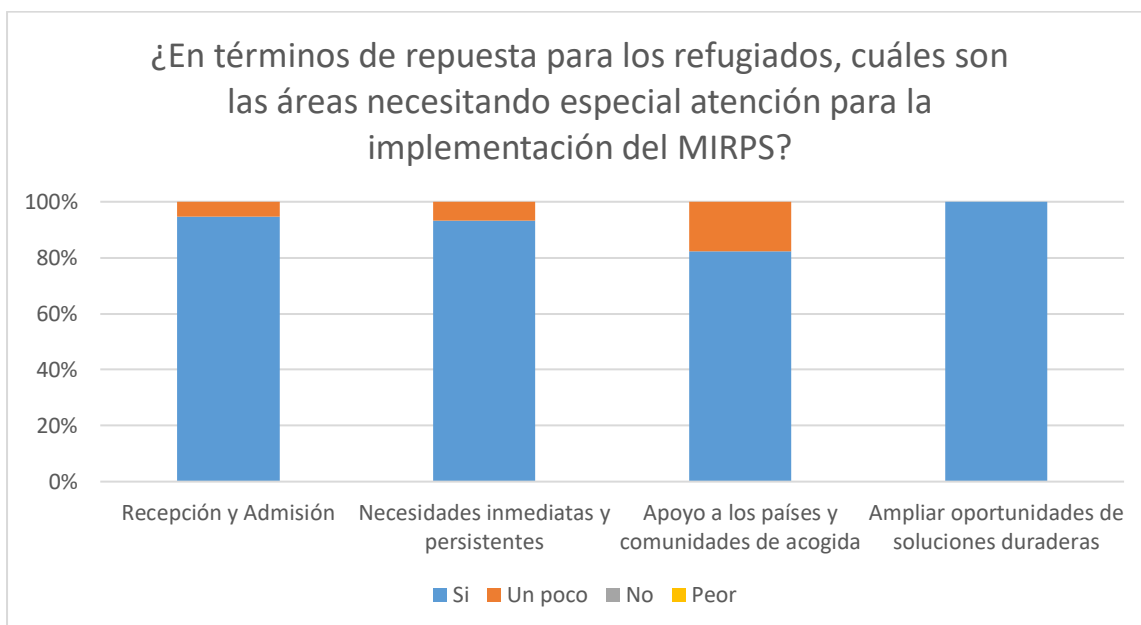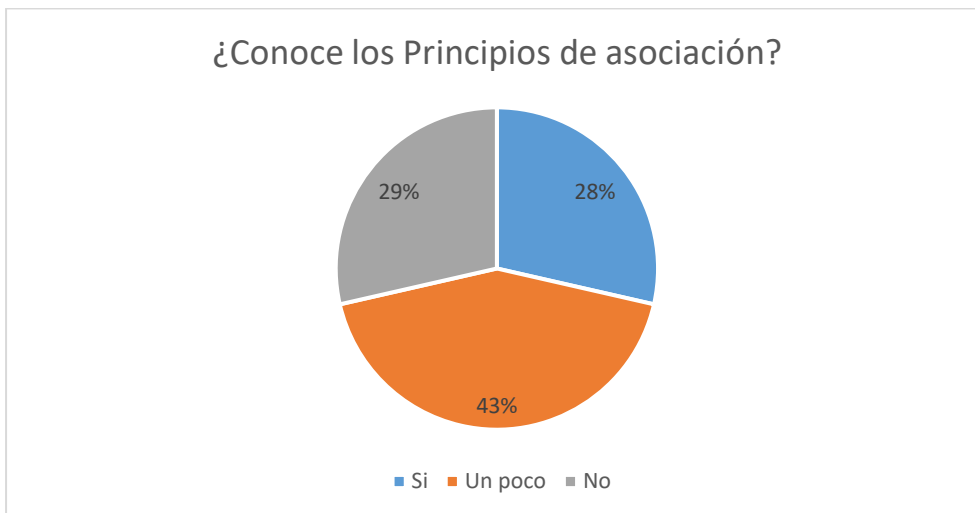
Annex I: Participants List

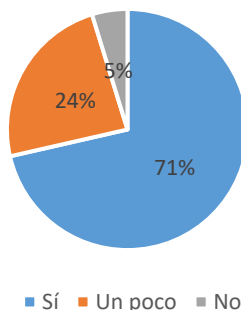| NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
Gabriela Liguori	Coordinadora General	CAREF	Argentina
Liliana Scheines	Coordinadora General	Cooredor Humanitario Provincia San Luis	Argentina
Maria Dolores Penna	Ministra Consejera	Embajada de Brasil en San José	Brasil
Dra. Gabriela Richard	Jueza	Tribunal Administrativo Migratorio (TAM)	Costa Rica
Richard Carlderón	Juez	Tribunal Administrativo Migratorio (TAM)	Costa Rica
Marlen Luna	Jueza	Tribunal Administrativo Migratorio (TAM)	Costa Rica
Cynthia Mora	Investigadora	FLACSO	Costa Rica
Laura Arguedas Mejía	Asesora	Despacho de la Vicepresidencia	Costa Rica
José Vargas O.	Asesor Jurídico	ACAI	Costa Rica
Gloria Maklouf	Directora	ACAI	Costa Rica
José Riera	Profesor	University of Peace	Costa Rica
Bettina Ide	Asesora Diálogo Político	Pan Para el Mundo	Costa Rica
Giovanna Tipán	Directora	Gobierno provincial de Pichincha	Ecuador
Juan Pablo Terminiello	Oficial protección	ACNUR	Ecuador
Xavier Gudiño	Gerente Legal America Latina	Asylum Access	Ecuador
Caroline Michael Asiala	Líder de Proyectors Especiales y Comunicación	Asylum Access	Ecuador
Noah Bullock	Director	Fundación Cristosal	El Salvador
María Elena Alvarado Ayala	Técnica de prevención de la violencia contra las mujeres	ISDEMU	El Salvador
Sara Berríos	Técnica	ISDEMU	El Salvador
Berta Guevara	Coordinadora Human Mobility and Migration Program	AFSC El Salvador	El Salvador
Marisol Garrido	Directora Asuntos Migratorios	Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Guatemala	Guatemala
Jennifer Chávez	Coordinadora de protección y asistencia a los refugiados	PMH – CEG Guatemala	Guatemala
Nelson Garcia Lobo	Director CASM / ACT Alliance	ACT Alliance	Honduras
Belén Barrera Pacheco	Directora de Area	COMAR	Mexico
Sergio Vallejos	CEO	NOOX / FRI	Mexico

Elba Coría	Directora	Clínica Jurídica Alaíde Foppa, Universidad Iberoamericana	Mexico
Nancy Pérez García	Directora General	Sin Fronteras Mexico	Mexico
Alejandra Macías	Directora AA Mexico	Asylum Access Mexico	Mexico
Tiziana Clerico	Partnership Section	ACNUR	Suiza
Jérôme Elie	Senior Policy Officer	ICVA	Suiza
Sophie Helle	Policy Officer	ICVA	Suiza
Floriencia Reggiardo	Abogada	CEJIL	Region
María Eugenia Pérez Ponsa	Especialista en políticas publicos	IPPDH Mercosur	Regional
Adeline Neau	Investigadora	Amnistía Internacional	Regional
Juan Carlos Murillo	Jefe de la Unidad Regional Legal	ACNUR	Regional
Giovanni Bassu	Representante Adjunto	ACNUR	Regional
Aída Arguello	Directora Ejecutiva	SISCA	Regional
Karina Sarmiento	Directora estrategía y innovación	Asylum Access	Regional
Lizeth Lema	Gestora de políticas y redes de América Latina	Asylum Access	Regional

¿Conoce los Principios de asociación?

29%   28%

43%

■ Si ■ Un poco ■ No

¿En términos de repuesta para los refugiados, cuáles son las áreas necesitando especial atención para la implementación del MIRPS?

	Recepción y Admisión	Necesidades inmediatas y persistentes	Apoyo a los países y comunidades de acogida	Ampliar oportunidades de soluciones duraderas

■ Si ■ Un poco ■ No ■ Peor

Se siente comprometido a trabajar en asociación con los diferentes actores para la implementatción del MIRPS?

10%

90%

■ Si ■ Un poco ■ No

Siente que ahora conoce más sobre los Principios de asociación ?

- Sí 71%
- Un poco 24%
- No 5%

¿Cuál es la cosa más útil que aprendió en este taller?
- ❖ Proceso de los pactos (x6): La estructura del MIRPS y de los distinctos marcos; como las acciones se deben articularse para dar respuesta en el marco del CRRF
- ❖ Experiencias de otros países en temas comunes (x5): Buenas practicas, experiencias y ejemplos intercambiados; ver algunas tendencias de mejorar la aplicación y materialización de los refugiados y los solicitantes
- ❖ Compartir y generar información (x3): Que se pueden dar aportes y estos ser tomados en cuenta; experiencias y visiones sobre las brechas y acciones prioritarias por tema; retroalimentación de todos los grupos
- ❖ La participación y el trabajo que realiza la sociedad civil (x2): las redes a nivel regional, el trabajo de concientización de esos temas
- ❖ Todo muy bien y muy útil (x2)
- ❖ La metodología y los principios de asociación (x2)

¿Se siente más comprometido a trabajar en asociación con los diferentes actores para la implementación del MIRPS?

- Si 81%
- Un poco 19%
- No 0%
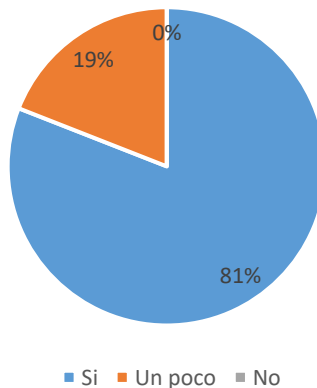
¿Qué habría podido ser mejor? Recomendaciones de mejoramiento

- ❖ Me gusto (x16) – Todo estuvo bien y participativo; la discusión enriquece y sensibiliza; se aprenden nuevas buenas prácticas y se comparten ideas; El intercambio en grupos pequeños siempre es muy útil y provechoso; Solo acompañaría más el trabajo en grupos; sido muy útiles los espacios de discusión en grupo, sobre todo de la mañana
- ❖ El tiempo siempre es insuficiente (x2)
- ❖ Sólo que debería de llegar a más personas de la sociedad civil y funcionarios públicos
- ❖ Profundizar la explicación sobre ICVA y compartir cuales son los temas o retos relevantes para esa red (x2)
- ❖ Acortaría la presentación – más incentivo al debate
- ❖ Más explicación sobre:
    - o nuevas necesidades de protección en la región
    - o El dialogo estructurado (x2)
    - o El MIRPS y las acciones concretas (x2)
- ❖ Algunos temas pudieron ser tratados con mayor orden para generar más impacto
- ❖ Promover más proactividad en los procedimientos, que los Estados deben seguir (x4): Es necesario que se materializa todos los compromisos ya asumidos con los gobiernos; Es responsabilidad de los estados liderar la implementación; Profundizar en relación con la motivación para que los estados comprometidos cumplen.
- ❖ Quizás se podría evaluar formas de articulación entre los actores según las diferentes visiones y opiniones de los actores (x2)
- ❖ Es una muy buena iniciativa, sin embargo, es importante que se escogen mejor los temas para aprovechar mejor los espacios de encuentro según MIRPS
- ❖ Solicitó que envíen información para lectura