



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED
AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

ICVA Remarks at ECOSOC HAS Side Event on “The CRRF – potentially a game changer in large scale and protracted refugee situations”.

22 June 2017
8:30 – 9:45
Palais Room XXII

How do we make the CRRF a game changer? Let’s start by challenging the premise of the question. Maybe it already is a game changer.

The past is littered with international events that have left us with unfulfilled commitments. This is in part due to a lack of follow-up mechanisms and waning momentum. However, when it comes to important commitments made last September, the CRRF is a vehicle for follow-up.

Ethiopia is a case in point. It made nine commitments in September to further improve rights and service delivery for refugees. The application of the CRRF in Ethiopia is directly related to delivering on those commitments.

I am very proud of the NGOs in our network who are working hard to contribute to these efforts now. Rachel Criswell, the Rapporteur at last week’s well-attended UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations, will soon provide a report with concrete recommendations to UNHCR’s Executive Committee. Manisha Thomas, from Plan, has been carrying out missions to support NGO engagement in the country pilots. Many other NGO representatives working on this are here in this room.

Here are ten ideas we’ve heard for the CRRF to succeed.

- 1. Define what we mean by a multi-stakeholder, “whole of society” approach and put it into practice.** Let’s ensure humanitarian principles and accountability mechanisms are strengthened in the process. The Principles of Partnership, which are enjoying a 10-year anniversary, should serve as a basis for working together in complementarity.
- 2. Translate the CRRF into plain language.** To implement it - especially with a whole of society approach, it needs to be explained in plain language. ICVA has tried to do its part by launching last week the “Global Compact Explained.” Last week High Commissioner Grandi opened a competition to find a new name for CRRF. Ideas are welcome.
- 3. Communicate – raise awareness and conduct outreach - in a big way.** One participant to the UNHCR-NGO consultations last week asked: “how can we have a whole-of-society approach when most of the society doesn’t know about the CRRF?” We’ve organized webinars and missions. Now we are exploring options now for more face-to-face engagement with NGOs. UNHCR and others could do the same.

4. **Localize the discussion.** CRRF secretariats or other mechanisms are not yet functioning in most countries. Work remains to have meaningful engagement with INGOs, NNGOs, local leaders, host communities and refugees themselves. These are the key constituents in the “whole-of-society” approach that the CRRFs are supposed to test.
5. **Globalize the discussion.** To translate the CRRF into a truly global process that goes beyond East Africa and Central America we need to bring the CRRF discussion into all regions, including North America and Europe. Donor countries can be inspired by the CRRF to reflect internally on how to change their asylum systems, resettlement programs and offers of alternative pathways, and funding mechanisms.
6. **A particular focus should be placed on ensuring that the views of women and girls – the majority of refugees – are sought and taken into consideration.** Last week we heard NGOs also raise concerns about youth, IDPs, camp-based vs. urban displaced, persons with disabilities, LGBT, and others.
7. **Deliver “humanitarian speed with development depth” (Yasmine Sherif/ Education Cannot Wait).** A game changer would be to manage to bridge humanitarian and development approaches, without undermining humanitarian principles and accountability mechanisms. NGOs have much to contribute in this domain: many have historically worked through a mix of humanitarian, development, state-building and peace programming. Can we offer our learning? Can we create platforms to bring different actors together to learn how we operate and what we can bring in complementarity?
8. **A critical missing piece right now is a clear path forward on predictable responsibility sharing.** This is the key to success or failure. We need operational, policy and political paths forward.

In the East and Horn of Africa, for example, although populations have been displaced for years, few have durable solutions prospects. We heard last week from a former refugee: we are born displaced, we grow up displaced, and start our own families displaced. If return isn’t an option for us, we need alternatives.

- ✓ Freedom of movement, access to education and livelihoods, real resettlement and alternative pathways would be game changers. Djibouti’s law seems progressive in refugee access to employment and naturalization.
 - ✓ Ultimately, success hinges on funding, which is – whether rightly or wrongly -- perceived to be a big factor incentivizing state participation in the CRRF. We need to address the current mismatch between the expectations to receive and the political will to offer. The trends described last night at the launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview and Global Humanitarian Assistance reports were disturbing. If the Uganda Solidary Summit turns up short, we face a real risk of going backwards.
9. **Let’s adjust our outlook and give ourselves time.** We need rapid results, quick wins on one hand to keep the momentum. On the other hand, we need to

be realistic. Generating political will takes time. Learning how to work with new partners takes time. Building trust takes time. Processing lessons learned takes time. Ultimately, structures won't implement the CRRF, people will. **And people need time.**

- 10. Finally, let's come back to the core.** The biggest applause came last week when we remembered the core of the core of UNHCR's protection mandate. **Refoulement remains a shocking, egregious violation. The other part of UNHCR's mandate, solutions, has always been there. So when we think about that, we wonder is the CRRF's "new way of working" really new? Let's come back to the core, and use this vehicle to achieve what we've wanted to all along.**