

Refugee engagement and participation in the Global Refugee Forum

1. The Global Compact on Refugees and refugee engagement

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018, sets out a blueprint for better, timelier, and more comprehensive refugee responses. The GCR clearly recognizes refugees and host community members as key to ensuring that refugee responses are meaningful, appropriate, accessible, and inclusive. In the spirit of the GCR, and building on good practices developed throughout the GCR consultations process in terms of facilitating refugee self-representation and participation, UNHCR sought to ensure that a diverse range of refugee voices, representing different regions and displacement situations, would be clearly heard throughout the preparation process for the first-ever Global Refugee Forum. Substantial efforts were undertaken to ensure adequate representation in line with age, gender and diversity considerations, as well as ensuring representation of refugees living in major refugee hosting countries, resettled refugees, and returnees. NGO and refugee-led organizations themselves have played an instrumental role in facilitating contact and outreach and supporting the engagement of diverse refugee voices in this process.

2. Efforts to engage refugees in the preparatory process for the Global Refugee Forum

Engagement at the global level

Engagement of refugee co-sponsors

Six official refugee co-sponsors were identified to support the inclusion of refugee voices in the preparatory process and were engaged in the six co-sponsorship groups. The co-sponsorship arrangement provided an important platform for refugees and their representatives to become actively engaged in the pledge development processes at national, regional, and global levels and to help mobilize high-level support towards these contributions.

The refugee co-sponsors played many roles. They:

- advocated for and mobilized contributions in the area of focus
- shared information and expertise about needs, gaps, and challenges
- channeled relevant information to their respective refugee communities and networks to keep them apprised of the process
- were thought leaders on the area of focus
- played a role in shaping the area of focus in the programme of the Forum in collaboration with fellow co-sponsors
- participated in the Forum to represent a refugee voice and perspective in the thematic discussions

Participation of refugee-led networks in the global preparatory process and relevant meetings held in Geneva

Two global refugee-led networks, the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) and the Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC), as well as a number of refugee women from diverse backgrounds and regions who formed a Gender Audit team supported by the University of New South Wales, were particularly closely engaged in the preparatory process at the global level, participating in all three preparatory meetings and contributing actively to the six co-sponsorship groups.

Regional engagement

The Danish Refugee Council, in collaboration with UNHCR, facilitated preparatory workshops for representatives of diaspora and refugee-led organizations at regional level from July until December 2019 in Europe, East Africa, and the Middle East. Participants brought experiences and ideas from their constituency to a broader platform, sought meaningful partnerships with other stakeholders for joint pledges and contributions to the Forum, and reported the outcomes back to their constituencies. Four representatives from the workshops provided insights from these workshops at the Global Refugee Forum.

The GRN have also played an important role in convening refugee-led summits in key regions, including Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East and North Africa, ensuring that refugee communities operating at local and national levels are equally able to contribute to the discussions held in the context of the Forum. The GRN has shared outcomes and highlighted recommendations from the summits at the preparatory meetings, including during dedicated events attended by Member States, International Financial Institutions, United Nations agencies and NGOs.

In addition, UNHCR conducted three regional NGO/multi-stakeholder consultations for the Middle East and North Africa (Amman, 20-21 June 2019), Southern Africa (Johannesburg, 10-11 September), and South America (Rio de Janeiro, 21-22 November), which offered opportunities for refugees to engage with other stakeholders and discuss challenges and opportunities and highlight good practices and contributions for the Forum. The consultations offered the possibility for participating partners to consider how to support meaningful refugee participation and engagement more effectively. For example, following the South America consultation, UNHCR agreed that the organization will support the establishment of a regional network of refugees.

Several consultations were held at regional and at national level, engaging refugees and other people of concern and including them in national consultations.

3. Efforts to facilitate participation in the Global Refugee Forum event

Significant efforts were made to enable a variety of refugee voices to be heard at the Global Refugee Forum from 16 to 18 December 2019 in Geneva. Over 70 refugee participants, representing the five regions and different ages, genders, and other diversity considerations, were supported by UNHCR or partners to attend and contribute to the discussions as speakers and presenters, pledge-makers, members of State and multi-stakeholder delegations, as well as representatives of academia and sports entities. Refugees were able to share their experiences and expertise, network with other stakeholders, and represent their communities, initiatives, and organizations.

Among the participants were community activists and leaders, representatives of national refugee-led initiatives (such as the Refugee Engagement Forum in Uganda), and global networks, such as the Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC), the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN), a delegation of refugee youth and students from different backgrounds, and several individuals with expertise in one or more of the Forum's areas of focus. Refugees opened and closed the Forum, and their recommendations – made throughout the Forum in the plenary, high-level dialogues, spotlight sessions, and speakers corner – were recognized and reflected on by several delegations. During the three days, refugee representatives interacted with a

wide range of stakeholders, as well as the media. They also connected with one another during a preparatory workshop and provided valuable feedback to the refugee engagement approach at a debrief following the Forum, which will help inform follow-up activities as well as planning for the next Global Refugee Forum in 2023.

4. Co-creating, implementing and evaluating pledges

The GRN submitted the first pledge in June 2019, kick-starting the pledge development process. Throughout the preparations, refugees and refugee-led organizations proactively reached out to Governments, the private sector, and other counterparts to discuss refugee participation in the GCR implementation process and have used the opportunities for connecting with other stakeholders through the six co-sponsorship groups to link up with potential pledge partners. Refugees have put forward pledges, including contributions seeking to co-create enabling environments for refugees' and affected others' meaningful participation, investing in youth, and building community resilience. To the extent possible, UNHCR has sought to encourage and facilitate inclusive pledge development processes at global, regional, and national levels and to support pledge-matching.

Much of the pledge-matching will happen *in follow-up* to the Forum. Proactively approaching relevant refugee-led networks and organizations in the months following the Forum will be key. The dashboard for pledges, which has gone live during the Forum, will be a helpful entry point.

ANNEX

Please find below a few examples of stakeholder consultations

National level

Consultations at the national level strove for strong participation of persons of concern.

In Nigeria, the National Commission for Refugees and IDPs (NCFRMI), with the support of UNHCR, organized a series of State-level GCR consultation meetings in different field locations in October and November 2019, taking a “whole of society” approach. Among participants were people of concern, federal and State government officials, local communities, INGO/NGO/CSOs, religious bodies, humanitarian agencies, United Nations organizations, academia, and the private sector. A total of 375 participants took part, among them 32 representatives of people of concern (refugees/IDPs/returnees). Six representatives were invited to a national-level consultation meeting on 27 and 28 November, which had 108 participants, proactively contributing to drafting pledges submitted to the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development. Nigeria submitted the finalized pledges to UNHCR HQ, following the Minister's endorsement.

Regional level

APRRN¹ and APNOR² Regional Protection Forum

From 6 to 11 September 2019, the Asia Pacific Regional Protection Forum, organized by regional refugee-led organizations, took place in Bangkok, providing a platform to voice key

¹ Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network

² Asia Pacific Network of Refugees

concerns, share good practices, and discuss possible pledges for the Forum from regional stakeholders, including refugee networks. The workshop was attended by refugees, UNHCR, and non-governmental and civil society organizations.