

High-Level Officials Meeting Summary of the Roundtable on Partnerships

25 November 2021 (14:00-17:00 CET)

Executive Summary

The virtual Roundtable on Partnerships, the third in a series of preparatory roundtables convened in the lead-up to the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM), explored the critical role of enhanced collaboration, through current and emerging multi-stakeholder partnerships, including through innovative national and regional arrangements, towards greater burden and responsibility sharing. The session included three panels, the first of which explored the role of new kinds of partnerships that have emerged in the context of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The second panel highlighted the value of refugee inclusion in new forms of collaboration with established partners. The third panel looked at national and regional arrangements that are key to comprehensive refugee responses, focusing on concrete examples of whole-of-government approaches in practice, Comprehensive Refugee Response frameworks, regional approaches, and the Support Platforms. The session reaffirmed the value of the whole-of-society approach, localization, inclusion, and continued efforts, through new or strengthened partnerships, at enhancing self-reliance and protection, drawing upon examples from the private sector, sports organizations, the legal aid community, refugee-led organizations, United Nations agencies, States, and other actors.

Summary of Discussion

Opening remarks by Ms. Kelly Clements, Deputy High Commissioner

Ms. Clements outlined key learnings related to partnerships from the recently launched GCR indicator report. While significant progress has been made in this area, the report reinforced the need for more to be done, particularly in the area of localization. Based on the data available and the period covered during the report (2016-2021), the number of partners contributing to refugee responses increased significantly, with United Nations' partners listed in country plans doubling by 2020, the participation of NGOs tripling, and the support for refugee responses from the private sector increasing markedly.

The 2020 OECD survey showed that the overall proportion of Official Development Assistance for refugee and host communities channelled directly through national actors decreased during the period, with levels at eight percent in 2018 and four percent in 2019. The percentages are well below the target agreed by major donors and aid organizations under the Grand Bargain in 2016, to provide 25 per cent of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders 'as directly as possible' by 2020. However, the OECD survey does not capture the full extent of re-allocation of ODA received by UN and other multilateral actors to national actors. The last Grand Bargain report, while not specific to refugee situations but to humanitarian funding more generally, showed that the number of signatories that allocated 25 per cent or more of their humanitarian funds to national or local responders as directly as possible increased from five in 2017 to 13 in 2020. In 2019, UNHCR, for example, allocated USD 1.376 billion to over 1,100 partners, including USD 752.6 million to local responders, national NGOs, and governments. As a result, UNHCR met the Grand Bargain target by transferring 25.8 per cent of its annual programme expenditure to national actors.

During that same period, Ms. Clements noted that donors reduced bilateral Official Development Assistance channelled to national actors in the Middle East and North Africa Region and Europe, while they increased it in Asia and the Pacific and the Americas, where the proportion rose significantly, even though still lower overall. She further noted that partnerships have been central to the national and regional arrangements envisioned by the Global Compact on Refugees to facilitate comprehensive refugee responses, including the three support platforms launched at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), which expanded the base of support including through greater involvement of development actors and other non-traditional stakeholder groups.

Key Outcomes and Recommendations

Panel 1: New partnerships

The panel focused on new partnerships that emerged or were strengthened as a result of the GCR with a focus on the role of legal actors, sports organizations, the private sector, and cities. The session, moderated by Mr. Ahmad Mudasser Wahidi, social entrepreneur and founder of Wah-Mantu, included interventions by Ms. Awmaima Amrayaf, Pro Bono Legal Officer, DLA Piper; Ms. Jojo Ferris, Head of the Olympic Refugee Foundation; Mr. Oisín Walton, Instant Network Programme Manager, Vodafone Foundation; and Ms. Christina Wandeler, Head of Foreign Affairs of the City of Zurich, on behalf of the Mayors Migration Council and the Mayors Mechanism.

New and innovative partnerships that emerged in the context of the GCR have shown how the whole-of-society spirit at its center has made a difference, leveraging complementary strengths, unlocking resources, and committing to long-term improvements in people's lives. Strong examples of sustained, multi-stakeholder partnerships include the joint legal community pledge made at the Global Refugee Forum ([PILnet](#)), where pro bono lawyers all over the world have provided legal support for refugees on an unprecedented scale.

Moreover, the unique and multi-faceted benefit of sports was outlined including its accessibility, potential to facilitate locally driven partnerships, and its power to promote social inclusion and protection. The panel called for greater engagement by partners outside the traditional sports sector and more efforts at systematically embedding sports interventions in refugee response planning.

The panel addressed how the private sector can play a unique role in fostering innovation and solutions, providing the example of the [Instant Network Schools](#) initiative. It demonstrated that the private has a critical leading role to play – through shared-value partnerships, investments, and innovations to benefit refugees and host communities. These partnerships should contribute to addressing wider challenges in society, be dedicated to engagement in the long-term, leverage strengths, address identified needs, and have dedicated capacity.

The discussion also called for enhanced engagement of cities and local governments, including through the Mayors Migration Council and the Mayors Mechanism. Cities are uniquely placed to support in refugee integration and inclusion as well as the identification of local solutions. However, there is a need for increased resources that would go directly to cities as well as improved coordination to help achieve better human-centred migration and displacement policies. Within the United Nations, it was noted that there is significant momentum to increase city partnerships in line with the Secretary General's efforts to reinvigorate inclusive multilateralism through the 'Our Common Agenda'. The pledge by the Mayor of Zurich to host the meeting of the Mayors Migration Council in Zurich in 2023 was referenced.

Panel 2: New forms of collaboration with established partners

The second panel explored the different partnerships working towards the goals of the Global Compact including UN agencies, governments, NGOs, and refugee-led organizations. It also discussed age, gender and diversity approaches in programme and project implementation. The session was moderated by Ms. Anila Noor, Managing Director, New Women Connectors. Panellists included Mr. Barthelemy Mwanza, Co-chair of Global Youth Advisory Council, Member of the Interim Persons of Concern Advisory Group (IAG) to UNHCR; Ms. Deepa Nambiar, Director of Global Programs and Policy, Asylum Access; Ms. Leila Pakkala, Senior Advisor, Strategic Partnerships, UNICEF; and, Mr. Jesse Wood, Chief, Emergencies and Transitions Unit, World Food Programme (WFP).

The panel showed how many traditional partnerships have been strengthened through new forms of collaboration – including and involving refugees in programmes and policies. It considered how refugee-led organisations bring innovation, capacity, and expertise to refugee responses, as seen in the context of the

pandemic. It is necessary to address barriers to their involvement and find ways to ensure that refugee-led organisations have the support to contribute and opportunities to participate in the policy discussions that affect them. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the challenges of refugees but provided an opportunity for humanitarian actors, including refugee-led organizations, to mobilize and act in their host communities. Several youth-led initiatives for the benefit of refugees and other persons of concerns were highlighted, including livelihood programmes, trainings on gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, and conflict management. Youth engagement can be strengthened further by opening up opportunities and creating spaces for partnerships.

The UN common pledge has shown that every humanitarian and development agency in the UN and other key stakeholders have unique and complementary roles to play in ensuring refugees are counted and included in efforts to scale up, strengthen, and sustain national systems as services. Increasing refugee self-reliance and providing solutions call for collective efforts, including new partnerships with other UN agencies. With reference to the UNICEF and UNHCR Blueprint for Action, UNICEF highlighted the urgent need to ensure children are visible in national statistics, for inclusion in the host country programming and budgeting. Partnerships should also shift from short-term humanitarian interventions to sustainable service delivery. On the UNHCR-WFP Joint Hub on Programme Excellence and Targeting, WFP called for maximum impact work for refugees and by refugees, which necessitates learning and modelling new ways of working and a shift in perspective. Outcomes that are best for refugees will require collaboration with governments and the donor community and availability of evidence that captures the voice of those affected.

Partnership approaches also need to address barriers to including refugee-led organizations equitably in systems, partnerships, and daily interactions to ensure effective localization. Equitable partnerships are not only the right thing to do, but also are necessary. Giving visibility, recognizing expertise, and educating oneself are key. Refugee projects should ideally be co-designed and co-led by local partners, while ensuring diversity, equity, and energy investment. Further, partnerships should not be solely focused on capacities, but also opportunities for greater impact and accountability.

Panel 3: Innovative national and regional arrangements

The panel focused on new national and regional arrangements have facilitated broadened engagement across and within governments, as well as provided entry points for different stakeholders and partners to support comprehensive refugee responses. Moderated by Ms. Malak El Hout, Manager, Vocational Training Program, Makhzoumi Foundation/3RP partner, Lebanon, panellists included Ms. Veneranda Ingabire, Single Project Implementation Unit Coordinator, Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management, Government of Rwanda; Dr. Robert Limlim, Director, CRRF Secretariat and Office of the President, Uganda; Mr. Francesco Luciani, Head of Unit Migration and Forced Displacement, European Commission, Directorate General for International Partnerships; and Ms. Betilde V. Muñoz-Pogossian, Director of the Department of Social Inclusion at the Organization of American States (OAS).

The moderator spoke to the Refugee and Resilience response plan (3RP) which introduced a paradigm shift in the response to the Syria crisis by combining humanitarian and development capacities, innovation, and resources. 3RP partners have made a significant and concrete impact in support of national efforts and continue to be at the cutting edge of programme and policy innovation. Uganda was highlighted as a country where the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework secretariat was key to operationalising the nexus between humanitarian and development interventions in a manner that created a platform for all players to participate. Following a multi-stakeholder, whole-of-society approach, individual sector response plans were prepared as a means of advancing the GCR locally to help partners adequately invest in their various modes of operations and sectors. The need to work with local communities and governments in a coordinated manner was highlighted as a means of enabling refugees to be included in national development plans. Rwanda was also highlighted for its efforts at encouraging an integrated approach to the national refugee

response and birth registration. The results-oriented approach worked to encourage greater collaboration among various local ministries.

Regional organisations also have a critical role to play in comprehensive approaches to refugee situations, establishing platforms, coordinating responses, encouraging solidarity, and mobilizing resources, as how OAS did through engagement of the private sector, and in initiating the MIRPS, which has become a proven framework for regional cooperation. Greater cooperation by regional private sector actors, to support in inclusion and protection, as well as improved coordination with other regional mechanisms dealing with migration and displacement were outlined as essential moving forward.

The support platforms launched at the first Global Refugee Forum were highlighted as one of the most tangible expressions of burden and responsibility sharing. Their strengths lie in their work across the humanitarian, development, peace nexus; the diversity of their members, such as the private sector and new partners; their flexibility and resilience in the face of new challenges; and their ability to mobilize resources to yield concrete outcomes. In this regard, there is a need for flexibility and support by a wider group of partners. Welcoming the forthcoming launch of the CAR Platform at the HLOM, it was noted that the effectiveness of support platforms could be assessed in terms of State leadership, solidarity with refugees, and engagement by a wide range of stakeholders.