

UNHCR's Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless People

Briefing Note



GRF Orientation Meeting for Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Participants, 12 December 2023

BACKGROUND

Organisations led by displaced and stateless people, including those led by refugees (RLOs), internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless people, and other community-based organisations (CBOs) are often the first responders in humanitarian emergencies, caused by conflict, natural disasters and/or climate change, and can provide support and services from the early days of an emergency, including where UNHCR and partners have limited or no access. Community members are the most knowledgeable about their own needs, and the best advisers on what approaches are suited in their local area. It is, therefore, necessary that UNHCR, partners and other actors understand, engage with and support these organizations, allowing them to strengthen and/or expand their activities and support services to refugees, or other forcibly displaced and stateless communities.

In May 2016, UNHCR, with other United Nations (UN) agencies, donors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other civil society actors, made the commitment at the World Humanitarian Summit to “Empower national and local humanitarian action” and thus, to work towards greater localisation. Moreover, the [New York Declaration](#) and the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) both refer to the importance of engaging directly with forcibly displaced

persons themselves. The [2019 Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) Pledges equally stipulate engagement and partnerships with forcibly displaced and stateless persons. [UNHCR's Strategic Direction 2022-2026](#) states that these will be implemented in collaboration with a broad circle of stakeholders, including forcibly displaced and stateless people themselves, and commits to strengthening the engagement with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people. Engaging with CBOs is also rooted in [UNHCR's community-based protection approach](#) and the [Age, Gender and Diversity \(AGD\) Policy \(2018\)](#), which puts forcibly displaced and stateless people at the centre of decisions that affect their lives and ensures accountability to affected people.

GENERAL INFORMATION

UNHCR's cross-divisional Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons was created in 2020 to coordinate and align internal efforts and to support ongoing work related to UNHCR's engagement of and partnership with forcibly displaced and stateless people. The Task Team is co-chaired by the Division of Protection (DIP)/Community-Based Protection (CBP) Unit and the Division of External Relations (DER)/Partnership and Coordination Service (PCS) – NGO and Civil Society Section. The Task Team is made up of members of other divisions and services in UNHCR Headquarters, including the Division of Strategic Planning and Results (DSPR), the Division of Resilience and Solutions (DRS), the GCR Coordination Team and the Innovation Service. The Task team is supported by a Refugee United Nations Volunteer (RUNV) and works closely together with the Regional Bureaux as well as with the Interim Advisory Group of Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons (2020-2022), and now the Advisory Board of Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons (December 2022 – December 2024).

Between 2020 - 2022, UNHCR's Task Team worked closely with an Interim Advisory Group of organizations led by displaced and stateless people that provided advice and co-developed some of the Task Team's deliverables. The selection process and terms of reference of the recently established Advisory Board were co-designed with the Interim Advisory Group members. To ensure that the membership selection follows a fair and transparent process, a call for applications was launched in May 2022, and through a recruitment process involving the Interim Advisory Group and [International Council of Voluntary Agencies \(ICVA\)](#), 16 organizations led by refugees, IDPs and stateless people, including those led by women, LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities, and other diverse groups were identified to be part of the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board acts as a representative body for organizations led by displaced and stateless people and plays a critical role in providing advice to UNHCR at the global level, based on their experiences and expertise. The Advisory Board was officially launched by UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection in December 2022. The member organization representatives came together for an in-person induction workshop in Geneva in March 2023, and has since met virtually on a bi-monthly basis. In December 2023 the Advisory Board attended the 2023 Global Refugee Forum in person.

Objectives of the UNHCR Task Team

The overall objective of this Task Team is to align internal efforts and develop a framework for UNHCR to advance engagement and partnering with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons. This work is done with due attention that all the deliverables of the Task Team are informed by the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of organizations led by displaced and stateless persons. The framework consists of the following outputs:



Objectives of the Advisory Board to the UNHCR Task Team

The Advisory Board acts as a representative body for organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people and will play a critical role in the development of the deliverables of the Task Team. This includes:

- defining the guiding principles for equal and meaningful participation at policy and strategic level;
- comment and input to guidance on meaningful participation;
- support the follow up on 2019 and 2023 GRF pledges on meaningful refugee participation;
- highlight gaps, identify and disseminate successful examples of partnerships, including the [Grant Agreement](#) and the Refugee-Led Innovation Fund mechanism;
- support the identification and coaching of refugees, IDPs and stateless people as representatives to global events and policy discussions; and
- contribute to the development of capacity building materials to strengthen meaningful participation.

CURRENT STATUS

UNHCR’s cross-divisional Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people continues to implement all five of its deliverables. To date, the following items have been completed:

Establishment of and engagement with Advisory Board

- A representative and inclusive Advisory Board is in place, composed of 16 organisations led by forcibly displaced people to ensure that the strategies, guidance and tools that the Task Team develops to strengthen predictable, meaningful engagement and partnership with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons address their actual needs and challenges.

- The Refugee UNV modality is promoted as a means to engage with people with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness as part of UNHCR workforce. Through this modality a person with lived experience of forced displacement is hired to support the work of the Task Team and the engagement with the Advisory Board. From July 2021 to December 2023 this position was held by a refugee leader from Kenya.

Development of tools to advance partnership and engagement with organizations

- The [Grant Agreement tool](#) and the accompanying Standard Operating Procedures were piloted (2021) and rolled out in 2022. In 2022, 70 Grant Agreements in 22 countries were signed with a total budget of \$233,000. In 2023, there were a total of 107 Grant Agreements signed, with a 62% increase in the Regional Bureau of Europe from 47 grant agreements in 2022 to 71 in 2023. Between 2021-2023, in total, UNHCR funded 192 grants to 148 organizations in 33 countries amounting to US\$ 787,970.
- A [Refugee-Led Innovation Fund](#) co-designed with refugees, organisations-led by displaced people and UNHCR was launched, which champions innovation by organizations that are led by forcibly displaced and stateless people. The Fund provides a holistic support mechanism combining financial resources, mentoring and technical expertise to both registered and unregistered organizations. Financial support of up to USD \$45,000 per organization was provided to 17 awardees during the pilot in 2022. In 2023, 26 projects were selected from over 3,000 applications received. The total funds allocated for these projects amount to 1,2 million USD, with implementation period set for 2024.
- A global [mapping tool](#) for CBOs and organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people is functional since October 2022. The mapping is a self-identification tool for grassroots organizations and is available in 7 languages. It facilitates the identification of such organizations operating at various levels (global, regional and country), and promotes opportunities for meaningful engagement with them. The analysis of the data is visualised in a dynamic dashboard accessible to UNHCR at HQ, Regional and Country Operations level.
- An [information repository](#) is in place and regularly updated with training materials, guidance, tools, policies, and promising practices that are relevant to organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people.
- To support the identification of and engagement with Refugee-led organization, in collaboration with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons, NGOs and academics, a definition of a "Refugee-Led Organization (RLO)" was developed and field-tested. It can be found on the [UNHCR Glossary](#), [Refworld](#), and the [information repository](#).
- In response to a call from RLOs, different terms were proposed and discussed with the Interim Advisory Group, to use when communicating with and about forcibly displaced and stateless people as an alternative to "Persons of Concern (POC)", based on which an internal note on language was produced and disseminated to all UNHCR staff.
- An internal resources page was created to disseminate guidance and tools, and to enhance UNHCR staff engagement with local organizations.
- An internal guidance on meaningful participation of RLOs in coordination mechanisms as well as an internal checklist for participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in regional and global events were developed and disseminated.

Support for participation in high-level global events

- The Advisory Board and other refugees have been supported in participating in various high-level events. As such, a side-event fully dedicated to meaningful refugee participation was organised by the Task Team and the Interim Advisory Group on 13 December 2021 at the margins of the [High-Level Official Meeting \(HLOM\)](#) and a [joint refugee statement](#), coordinated by the Interim Advisory Group and signed and endorsed by approximately 30 RLOs, was delivered at the opening of the HLOM on 14 December 2021.

- At the [UNHCR Global Consultations with NGOs](#) in June 2022, a virtual side-event on localization and climate change initiatives led by organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people was co-organized with the Interim Advisory Group, The Global Refugee-led Network (GRN), Oxfam, Independent Diplomat (ID), and other actors.
- The Advisory Board and Task Team supported the preparation of the 2023 GRF, including the development and presentation of a [Joint Refugee Statement](#) endorsed by [175 organizations](#), that was delivered in plenary during the opening session of the GRF, and the organisation of a parallel high-level event during the GRF 2023: Meaningful Refugee Participation: How Partnerships with Forcibly Displaced and Stateless People Improve Policies and Solutions with over 300 participants. Watch the full recording of the event [here](#). Over 300 forcibly displaced and stateless persons participated in the 2023 GRF and 22 delegations actively included refugees in preparations for and participation at the Forum.
- An analysis and review of all the GRF pledges related to meaningful refugee participation is carried out on a regular basis. In the follow-up to the 2023 GRF, 95 pledges that committed to contribute to meaningful refugee participation were identified.
- The Task team engages closely with GRN and R-SEAT who act as interim co-chairs of the multi-stakeholder Coalition of Meaningful Refugee Participation with Australia and the Netherlands as States co-chairs. The Coalition was formally launched at the 2023 GRF and is a place for stakeholders to exchange on, map and promote good practices, and develop an advocacy strategy to achieve specific objectives towards realizing meaningful refugee participation.
- The Advisory Board contributed to the development of a multi-stakeholder, multi-sector, pledge on [advancing localization in displacement and statelessness responses](#) that was launched during a parallel high-level event at the GRF 2023, with concrete commitments in the area of funding, capacity-sharing and inclusion in decision-making. So far, 41 stakeholders, including donors, pledged 104 million USD to support 470 local organizations (incl. over 200 RLOs).

NEXT STEPS

- Finalizing and disseminating an issue brief on engagement and partnership with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people.
- Contributing to UNHCR internal Operational Guidelines (OG) on Localization, by end of 2024, that aims to standardize localization practice across all operations and support UNHCR staff at the field, country, regional, and HQ level, to improve their engagement with local organizations, including those led by displaced and stateless persons.
- Facilitating access to learning platforms and systems to local partners, including organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons.
- Upon request and as relevant, reviewing and providing input to other UNHCR guidance and policy documents.

CONTACT US	
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