

UNHCR Regional Consultations with NGOs and civil society on “Solutions with a focus on Inclusion, and Gender Equality”.

Concept Note

A. Background

UNHCR has a long-standing commitment to work with NGOs and other civil society organizations, recognizing their critical role in providing protection, assistance and finding solutions for refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

The next round of regional consultations with NGOs and civil society will take place in 2023 and will be organized by each of the Regional Bureaux, to then inform the global consultations in 2024.

The topic will be “*Solutions with a focus on Inclusion (into national services) and Gender Equality*”. It is based on the outcome of a survey disseminated to civil society partners by each Regional Bureau and respective feedback from UNHCR’s Senior Executive Team (SET).

This concept note sets the tone for the development of regional specific concept notes by respective bureaux.

The regional consultations with NGOs and civil society will develop key recommendations on how to promote new avenues for collaboration in solutions and inclusion with an age, gender, diversity (AGD) lens, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of all. The topics of “solutions”, “inclusion” and “gender equality” are in line with [UNHCR’s Strategic Directions 2022-2026](#), [the Global Compact on Refugees](#) and the purpose of [the second Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) to be held in December 2023. The outcomes of the consultations will inform respective regional strategic priority settings and organizational strategies of UNHCR, NGOs and other civil society actors in the regions. The findings of the consultations will also be presented at the annual meeting of the UNHCR’s Executive Committee in October 2023 and inform and support the global NGO consultations to be held in Geneva in June 2024. Regional Bureaux are encouraged to engage with relevant HQ divisions and divisions for assistance and advice for the conceptualization of the respective sessions.

B. Topics

1. Solutions and Inclusion (in national systems)

UNHCR works with States, NGOs and civil society, and other stakeholders to identify and pursue solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless persons: advocating for conducive conditions for voluntary **repatriation**, **integration** in the host community, **resettlement**, and complementary pathways to third countries for refugees; and eradicating statelessness. NGO and civil society actors play a key role in these priorities through, for example: identification, case management, referrals and legal aid for resettlement; family reunification, and other sponsorship systems for complementary pathways; peace and reconciliation projects, housing land and property interventions, as well as financial and practical support for voluntary repatriation; and social, economic and legal interventions through education, livelihood and other service provision in support of local integration. Although new momentum and innovative approaches have emerged through processes such as the Global Compact on Refugees and the [UN Secretary-General](#)

[Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#), solutions have not kept pace with the number of people being displaced and becoming stateless. In line with UNHCR's Strategic Direction, it is fundamental to build on the multiplier effects of partnerships with NGOs and civil society to strive for progress, diversification, and innovation in the search for solutions out of displacement and statelessness.

To achieve durable solutions, the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations in national systems, programmes, and services is a key strategy to address their needs in a more predictable manner, promoting their self-reliance and resilience, while avoiding creating parallel systems. To this end, UNHCR particularly works with governments, civil society, and development actors in fostering opportunities to include displaced populations in national services.¹ This approach aims to ensure more cost-effective investments in national systems that will also benefit host communities through the expansion of quality services and investments in key sectors such as education, health, social protection, employment. NGOs and civil society partners support the approach through the development of projects that are aligned with the hosting country's inclusion plan, filling existing gaps without the creation of parallel systems, and facilitating the transfer of responsibilities to governmental structures. Interventions in this realm are varied and complement the work of governments in health, education, livelihoods, job-placement, social security, services for people with special needs, etc. Partnerships between UNHCR and civil society actors are critical in project implementation, streamlining support to host governments and advocating for inclusion into national systems. UNHCR also believes that partnerships can identify and test new innovative practices to enhance inclusion for forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

2. Gender equality

UNHCR's commitment to gender equality is articulated in the UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (2018) through five obligatory core actions. The [UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-26](#) identify accountability to women and children and gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and response as priority areas for additional, accelerated, and targeted action. UNHCR strives to ensure that women and girls participate equally and meaningfully in all decision-making, community management and leadership structures; are provided with individual registration and documentation; have equal access to and control over management and provision of food, core relief items, cash-based interventions; have equal access to economic, educational and health opportunities and have access to comprehensive GBV prevention and response services. UNHCR continues to strengthen engagement with displaced women-led organizations and strongly advocates for funding opportunities for these organizations through various mechanisms such as the [Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund](#). UNHCR also collaborates with the World Bank on the [Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement Research Program](#) and in early 2022, a [synthesis of this research](#) across 17 country studies was published to inform development policy and programming.

Over the years, UNHCR and partners have worked to prevent and respond to gender-related protection risks and needs for women, men, girls, and boys, while increasing the efforts to ensure that forcibly displaced and stateless persons are equally included in all steps of programming. New and ongoing conflicts, the pushback on women's rights, the climate and environmental crisis, the economic and social fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated gender inequalities. The consultations will focus on challenges and opportunities that are most relevant to the regional context and will aim to ensure that gender equality is fully considered in all

¹ [The 2022 HC Dialogue](#) on protection challenges structured conversations around three thematic pillars: early action, inclusion, and solutions, with protection as a central and cross-cutting objective throughout.

sessions, with specific recommendations aimed at strengthening meaningful participation, gender transformative approaches, addressing the gender data gap in humanitarian response, and strengthening evidence-based programming.

3. Side events

Regional Bureaux may decide to organize additional sessions or side events addressing regional priorities. Information sessions or side events for partners on the UNHCR programme reform and on the Global Refugee Forum 2023 are strongly encouraged.

C. Overall Objectives

Based on the above and grounded in [the Principles of Partnership](#), the 2023 Regional Consultations with NGOs and civil society will pursue the following objectives:

- Exchange and agree on regional UNHCR-NGOs and civil society strategic priorities for the topics discussed, taking into consideration the specific challenges and opportunities in each region.
- Develop regional-specific recommendations that promote solutions, inclusion and gender equality, targeting UNHCR, NGOs or other stakeholders in the region.
- Identify regional-specific recommendations that will inform the global consultations in 2024 on the same topics.
- Mobilize and inform partners at regional level in view of the second Global Refugee Forum.

The preparation modalities, agenda, and participation will be developed and communicated by each region.