



Oxfam's Response to the Global Compact on Refugees Zero Draft

Almost 18 months ago, 193 members of the United Nations committed themselves in the New York Declaration to: 1) promote “gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and fully respect and protect the human rights of women and girls” (para. 31); 2) “support host countries and communities...including by using locally available knowledge and capacities” (para. 80); and 3) develop “a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world’s refugees” (para. 68). Yet, the zero draft of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) issued by UNHCR on January 31, 2018, does not present a practical blueprint that will deliver on these commitments.

To ensure that the next iteration of the draft GCR delivers on the promise of the New York Declaration, Oxfam is calling for action in three key areas:

Women’s Rights and Gender Justice

The zero draft asserts that the success of the GCR will hinge on a few key points including “improved socio-economic conditions for refugees and host communities, notably women and girls” (para. 2). However, it fails to put forward any concrete approaches to achieving this goal. Refugee women and girls face substantial challenges – requiring a rights based approach to meet their specific needs. Yet, even in Section 2.6, which is entitled “Gender”, the paragraph starts with “states will” focus on women’s leadership and participation in processes, the promotion of women’s organizations, and the reduction of SGBV, but ends by specifically leaving follow-up to the discretion of states. This is not sufficient.

The next iteration of the draft GCR should commit states to the key recommendations laid out in Section 2.6, and then specifically identify programming, approaches, and funding that states need to take up to achieve these goals.

Promotion of Local and Refugee Leadership

We are pleased that the zero draft recognizes the expertise that refugees, host communities and local public officials bring to the table, but the final GCR needs to ensure that they are formally at the table.

While Section A.1 of the zero draft suggests that host states could take the lead in responding to the arrival of refugees. This should be presumed and supported. The New York Declaration asserted a bolder vision for refugee response, where host communities and countries are in the lead, and the myriad actors who may arrive take up the roles as supporters with technical expertise, capital, and human resources.

The next iteration of the draft GCR should specifically endorse the expertise of refugee women and local and national responders -public and private- and identify specific approaches that will both bolster their leadership and promote good practices that benefit refugees and host communities, consistent with the 2016 Grand Bargain.

Equitable and Predictable Responsibility Sharing

Oxfam welcomes the proposal for a global platform that would facilitate and support predictable and equitable responsibility sharing among states, but as currently proposed it would be an ad hoc forum. This temporary approach perpetuates the current failing system that relies entirely on the good will of states that too often do not rise to the occasion.

To truly realize the promise of the New York Declaration, the next iteration of the GCR should include a concrete mechanism for refugee protection and support that promotes equitable and predictable responsibility sharing, and a refugee “major” group that is empowered to inform the decisions which affect their lives.

Oxfam is committed to working alongside refugees, host communities, and governments to fully realize the potential of the final GCR. We stand ready to support the delivery of a GCR that is concrete in purpose, representative of refugee voices - particularly women’s voices and experiences - and robust enough to globally deliver on refugee rights. There is no time to waste.



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