

## The Global Refugee Forum: Opportunities for strategic civil society engagement

### 1. Background - Global Refugee Forum

The [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) was affirmed in December 2018 by the UN General Assembly. The four key objectives of the GCR are to: (1) Ease pressure on host countries; (2) Enhance refugee self-reliance; (3) Expand access to third-country solutions; and (4) Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. Starting in 2019, the [Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF) will take place every four years as the key event to drive progress around the objectives of the GCR.

The first GRF will be on **17 – 18 December 2019** in Geneva and will be co-hosted by UNHCR and Switzerland and co-convened by Ethiopia, Turkey, Germany, Costa Rica and Pakistan. It will be a high level (ministerial) event with participation from governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and representatives from refugee and hosting communities amongst others. On 16 December there will be a side event and roundtable discussions presenting additional opportunities for civil society to engage. The first GRF has three main objectives:

1. Create, develop and strengthen the **architecture and arrangements needed to operationalize the GCR** over the longer-term;
2. Translate the **principles of increased solidarity and more equitable burden and responsibility-sharing into concrete action**; and
3. Focus on **broadening the support base and arrangements contributing to burden - and responsibility-sharing**.

These objectives are intended to be met through: (1) announcement of **concrete pledges and contributions** by States and other actors that will advance the objectives of the GCR and achieve tangible benefits for refugees and host communities; (2) **showcasing of key achievements and good practice** for implementing the GCR including the application of Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in pilot contexts; and (3) an occasion where States **endorse the accountability framework** for the GCR (indicators, reporting modalities, tracking) as a basis for future stocktaking.

This year's GRF is being organized based on six [themes](#): (1) supporting arrangements for **burden and responsibility sharing**, including tools that facilitate more equitable sustained, and predictable contributions among States and other stakeholders; (2) increasing access to **education**; (3) creating an enabling environment that facilitates **jobs and livelihoods**; (4) providing access to clean **energy** and bolstering **infrastructure**; (5) facilitating **solutions**, such as broadening the base of resettlement actors, supporting conditions necessary for safe and dignified return, or resolving some longstanding protracted refugee situations; and (6) enhancing efforts to strengthen **protection capacity** through support for institutions, and preparedness and contingency planning. UNHCR has called for [co-sponsors](#) who can be both States and other stakeholders (such as non-governmental organizations). A number of ReDSS members at the global level have already formally announced their co-sponsorship of specific thematic areas (i.e. Save the Children – education, IRC – jobs and livelihoods, DRC – solutions).

These themes are being used to structure the GRF and preparations including the development and submission of [pledges and contributions](#) as well as sharing and exchange of [good practices](#). The submission of pledges and contributions by states and a range of stakeholders (including civil society) are central to the objectives of the GRF as it is hoped that actors will announce **new or additional commitments and advocacy and financial, material and technical assistance aligned to the GCR objectives**. Pledges and contributions can be made by stakeholders at national, regional and global levels and as individual, joint or matching pledges. UNHCR has been advocating for pledges and contributions to be submitted as early as possible to create momentum as well as facilitate matching exercises between pledges and assistance from donors and other partners committed (financial, technical and material).

### 2. Opportunities related to the Global Refugee Forum

The upcoming GRF is crucial to the momentum and credibility of the GCR moving forward. The GRF presents an important opportunity for collective civil society engagement to support ensuring that the GCR

can make a tangible difference in the lives of refugee and host communities. In particular in this region where CRRF has featured as a key theme for discourse on how the response to protracted refugee situations should change, civil society can use the GRF preparations and outcomes to strategically continue to advocate and shape the development of more holistic and longer-term responses.

A number of ReDSS members are already engaging at the global level and have developed statements and are working in coordination at various GRF [preparatory events](#) being held in Geneva and through thematic meetings of co-sponsors that began in July 2019.

UNHCR and other stakeholders including ReDSS members<sup>1</sup> have acknowledged the importance of the GRF preparations at the national and regional levels, led by States and inclusive of multi-stakeholder consultations. In particular these consultations can support the preparations of pledges and contributions where gaps and goals are defined under the GCR objectives and GRF themes and civil society can play an important role in shaping the development of GRF preparations.

### **3. How can civil society engage around the Global Refugee Forum preparations at national/regional levels?**

There are many different ways that ReDSS members and partners can utilize the GRF preparations in your country and at the regional level. The approach will necessarily be country specific, dependent on modalities for GRF preparations that authorities' take forward and building on existing opportunities. However, some broad suggested ideas/tactics for engagement are below:

- **Collectively advocate with authorities to initiate and implement multi-stakeholder preparations for the GRF.** Use other opportunities (such as existing coordination structures) to discuss GRF preparations and advocate for **an inclusive and meaningful approach** connected to existing coordination structures and other upcoming events in countries and the region.
- **Advocate and use your networks to support the meaningful participation of refugees and host community in the consultations.** This could include advocating for specific consultations in refugee hosting areas led by local authorities and actors, supporting refugee inclusion in government-led national consultation process or linking with networks that are supporting refugee and diaspora consultations (including planned regional events supported by Oxfam and DRC).
- Use the GRF preparations and national preparations for related events (such as the IGAD 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Nairobi Declaration and Action Plans) to **critically take stock of the implementation of CRRF related initiatives** through sharing of evidence and analysis.
- **Collaboratively develop key advocacy messages based on evidence around gaps and what is needed to achieve the GCR objectives** in your contexts such as policy or legislative changes, government ownership through the revision or adoption of plans and strategies or the need for these plans to be adapted to local contexts (district, sub-region, etc.).
- **Use GRF consultative processes and other opportunities to support governments to develop needs-based and goal-driven (tangible, realistic and measurable) [GRF pledges and contributions](#)** that builds on existing plans and strategies and/or use the GRF to advocate for renewed development of response frameworks in countries where these are non-existent or still under development
- **Consider advocating for or committing to joint or complementary GRF pledges and contributions** where civil society and other stakeholders (donors, international organizations, development actors etc.) can show support to governments or complement planned pledges and contributions to elevate key needs and gaps at the GRF.
- **Identify across ReDSS members and partners particular examples of good practice** in your context that could be showcased in the lead up to and at the GRF. Consider working together to develop good practice [documentation](#) for submission to UNHCR.

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<sup>1</sup> Danish Refugee Council, Save the Children, Oxfam International, Norwegian Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, 'Making the Global Refugee Forum a Success: NGO recommendations on GRF preparations' (2019).

- **Liaise with your global HQs around GRF preparations and developments in this region** to support ensuring that key advocacy messages related to your context are included in ways that your senior representatives will engage in the lead up to and at the GRF and side events.

#### **4. ReDSS support to GRF preparations**

Given the importance of the GRF, ReDSS has brought on additional capacity in 2019 to play a convening role in support of collective preparations for the GRF in the East and Horn of Africa Region and support strategic engagement of ReDSS members and partners in preparatory processes. Catherine (Cate) Osborn will be leading this coordination. ReDSS has also agreed to coordinate with UNHCR around ensuring meaningful and inclusive national-led GRF consultative processes in different countries in the region. ReDSS focus will be around:

- **Facilitating strategic engagement in the GRF preparatory processes** with key stakeholders<sup>2</sup> at country and regional levels together with UNHCR, including through convening regular meetings to promote a common understanding and collective GRF outcomes;
- **Documenting and sharing learning from the application of CRRF** in several countries in the East and Horn of Africa Region, as well as at the regional level, in particular in the context of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to inform the development of pledges and contributions;
- **Supporting the development of collective pledges and contributions towards the GRF key areas of focus**, with due consideration given to existing national and regional commitments<sup>3</sup>, and the meaningful participation of refugees and host communities, ensuring a common vision and agenda for the next four years, at both national and regional levels.

ReDSS will support coordination and information sharing amongst ReDSS members through existing mechanisms at the regional and country level. ReDSS has also set up a **GRF working group** as platform to assist in coordination within and between ReDSS members and partners. If you would like to be part of the monthly information and email group or would like more information please contact Cate Osborn at [c.osborn@regionaldss.org](mailto:c.osborn@regionaldss.org).

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<sup>2</sup> Refugees, host communities, diaspora groups, UN, NGOs, CSOs, FBOs, private sector, national and local authorities, municipalities, academics, development and humanitarian actors and donors, regional entities such as IGAD.

<sup>3</sup> Nairobi Declaration, Kampala Declaration (Jobs and Livelihoods), Djibouti Declaration (Education) etc.