



2021 Regional NGO Consultations
in the West and Central Africa Region
Session on Operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees
28 September

➤ **Participation and atmospherics:**

This session on GCR Operationalization brought together a record number of participants (more than 200). *The discussions were well attended and marked by an active participation from delegates. The participants generally expressed appreciation for the debates as well as the forward-looking deliberations. There were clear expectations in terms of follow-up*

➤ **Agenda**

1. Opening remarks pronounced by UNHCR RBWCA Deputy Director
2. Overview of the forced displacement situation in WCA and presentation of Session key objectives
3. Presentation of the GCR and GRF pledges at Global level
4. Presentation on GCR and GRF pledge implementation in WCA: Key situations
5. Brief on GCR related discussions involving NGOs
6. Discussions on practical example of NGOs contribution in the CRRF in WCA

1. Opening Remarks by Aissatou Masseck Dieng-Ndiaye

UNHCR RBWCA Deputy Director

The full operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees is increasingly becoming a reality, which promotes an inclusive and global approach, involving a wide range of state and non-state actors, including those from civil society and private sector, with the aim of supporting host States, refugees but also the communities.

The Global Refugee Forum was held at the end of 2019, during which entities from West and Central African region made 48 commitments (also hereinafter otherwise referred to as pledges) related to Education, Health, Employment, Livelihoods, Protection and Solutions. Additional commitments were made after 2019 and the region now has approximately 142 commitments ¹in the global database. All this works in favour of forcibly displaced people

¹ It should be noted that, for the WCA region, as of 05 November 2021, 144 pledges (74 HLS + 70 GRF pledges) were recorded in the Global Database

These consultations represent an opportunity to bring together hundreds of actors such as national NGOs, international NGOs, organisations led by POC, operating in WCA, to ensure that efforts to provide solutions for the forcibly displaced people are intensified. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to identify potential, additional commitments, facilitate the implementation of joint commitments and to develop financial contributions that can be pledged based on priority needs and identified political commitments. Similarly, efforts can be made to engage new actors. These consultations will enable UNHCR and NGOs to identify and take ownership of operational priorities.

Points of discussion

2. Overview of the forced displacement situation in WCA and presentation of Meeting key objectives

Marco Rotelli, Africa Regional Representative, ICVA

The GCR concept is one of the best matching elements that talks to the diversity of ICVA as a network that shows diverse NGOs. The idea of the whole-of-the society approach and a multi-stakeholder approach is probably one of the best translations of diversity in refugee affairs. As a diverse network of humanitarian NGOs, ICVA is committed to supporting NGOs in the GCR implementation. ICVA has been performing also some stocktaking around the pledges and the way to inform and to prompt more commitments from the NGOs community throughout Africa and elsewhere. Disseminating information, supporting implementation, exchanging among actors and stakeholders, promoting the NGOs engagement and participation at the global level, is something important.

The consultations are an opportunity for ICVA to share experience and contribute much more to the process, to reflect and find answers to many issues and also promote further engagement.

3. Presentation of the GCR and GRF pledges at Global level

Perveen Ali, GCR Support Team Coordinator

During the last GRF, more than seven initiatives have been launched and 1400 pledges were announced. However, due to the pandemic and the numerous constraints that it imposed, many states and other stakeholders that made pledges and commitments had thought about how they could adapt the commitments and pledges to support their response more effectively to the pandemic.

UNHCR has been checking in with states and other stakeholders, requesting progress updates on the pledges twice a year sending out a request or a reminder. There are updates for around 600 of the pledges. 130 of them have been reported as fulfilled in about 3/4 of them are in progress. This year 80 new pledges were received, which can potentially match with donors and other stakeholders to help facilitate implementation.

Out of around 142 pledges in WCA, updates have been received for 29 of them, 26 of which are reported as in progress. All stakeholders who made pledges are encouraged to update through the pledges' dashboard on the [Digital platform](#).

The High-level Officials Meeting is an opportunity to reflect on progress made since the first Global Refugee Forum. This Event will be focused on three priorities: 1) expanding support for refugees and host countries; 2) advancing implementation of pledges made at the first GRF; 3) Identifying areas in need of further support.

UNHCR organises consultations at the regional level according to specific themes such as Education and Jobs, Livelihoods, as well as with specific stakeholder groups such as the private sector, NGOs, development actors and others to take stock of progress made towards the Global Compact on Refugees and pledges. The next phase starting in November, is to bring the outcomes of all of those consultations to the global discussion through a series of five preparatory roundtables that will be held virtually in Geneva and will be open to all of the stakeholders who participated in the GRF.

The recommendations from the stocktaking, the preparatory roundtables and the High-level Officials Meeting will all feed into a summary outcome document that UNHCR will produce, which will contain all the recommendations, that will help to develop pledging guidance in early 2022.

HLOM will be held entirely virtually. Participants will partake in the discussions remotely. There will be three panels focused on the three priorities (mentioned above). There will be also some spotlight sessions focused on the support platforms. These will be interspersed by a general debate in which States and other stakeholders may make interventions.

NGOs and other stakeholders should make progress on implementing the pledges and initiatives and report of progress through the dashboard. This is key to showing continued engagement to keep up the confidence in the GCR process.

NGOs and other actors that made pledges are also encouraged to think about how they can align the pledges they made to support the policy pledges made by host countries for greater protection and inclusion of refugees.

UNHCR is preparing a virtual exhibition space, as part of the HLOM and participants are welcome to share their communications content, demonstrating the impact of pledges that have been implemented or good practises.

Stakeholders who have been invited to the HLOM are asked to ensure representation at the Senior level (heads of department or organisations). All stakeholders are invited to prepare interventions, reporting on that progress they have made, challenges they faced, recommendations they have identified for the future.

4. Presentation on GCR and GRF pledge implementation in WCA: Key situations

Ferdila Ouattara-Uche, RBWCA GCR focal point

In WCA region, there are 11.8 million POCs, among which 1.4 million refugees, over 7 million IDPs, over 1.7 million stateless people.

There are four major situations within the area: 1) Sahel (health crisis in Burkina-Faso, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Chad); 2) Lake Chad Basin Crisis; 3) Central African Republic; 4) Cote d'Ivoire. Refugee situations in some countries are protracted for 30 or 40 years (in Senegal, Gambia, Kenya). In this region, the discussions should be accentuated on Solutions.

Implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the related initiatives, including the pledges tabled for West and Central Africa Region (WCA) (around 142 pledges ²recorded in the Global Dashboard in July 2021) at the first GRF Forum of 2019 and future Forums, is central to UNHCR's protection and solutions mandate.

To assist in the operationalization of the GCR and effective and timely implementation of GRF pledges for the Region, UNHCR in collaboration with the regional entities of ECOWAS (West Africa) and CEMAC (Central Africa), held a virtual Stock-Taking Event, from 14 to 15 December 2020, as an opportunity to take stock of progress attained in the implementation of GRF and HLS pledges in WCA and highlight challenges. 15 countries highlighted such major challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown measures (the major factor that hampered the implementation of activities); financial constraints; electoral processes; political instability and limited national capacities.

Out of the commitments registered for the WCA region, 61 Global Compact commitments were tabled mostly by states and regional organizations. ECOWAS is very engaged in the process of adopting an action plan for the operationalization of the GCR in WCA. This action plan is being discussed and will be part of an adoption process.

It transpired from a review of the implementation of the commitments for the region that most initiatives concerned solutions since, 41% of the commitments are related to Solutions; 20% to Protection, 16% to Education; 15% to Energy; and 8% to Employment and Livelihoods. Among the 25 commitments concerning solutions, 6 refer specifically to “traditional” solutions, which mainly focus on the adoption and the transitional tripartite agreements and the resettlement opportunities, as well as demands that were made by Member States. There are also commitments on issues of naturalization, and 5 commitments where donors specifically tackle facilitating legal integration and providing access to services (e.g., employment, healthcare). There are 3 commitments of local solutions made by states to include refugees in the local development plans and programmes. This support should be materialised.

NGOs and other actors that made pledges are also encouraged to think about how they can align the pledges they made to support the policy pledges made by host countries for greater protection and inclusion of refugees. Having additional commitments from NGOs within region remains a possibility, but partners should also see how to best support entities which already made commitments.

In WCA, there are some issues that have not been given due consideration or even left out, such as Energy. There is only one pledge on clean energy by the government of Chad to facilitate access to solar energy.

5. Brief on GCR related discussions involving NGOs

Loise Dai Rocheteau ICVA Policy Officer - Forced Migration

The second Forum, taking place in 2023 will have an added dimension of follow-up and review of the pledges, engaging in the arrangements in the Compact that can be interesting for the region such as the Asylum Capacity Support Group, the Support Platforms.

² Please note that the latest version of the summary of pledges in the Global Dashboard available dates back to July 2021. As of 05 November 2021, 144 pledges (74 HLS + 70 GRF pledges) were recorded in the Global Database for the WCA region. Updates to the Global Dashboard are still on-going.

ICVA works to assist NGOs in their understanding of participation in and contribution to the process leading to the Forum. In that sense, ICVA organised and contributed to several NGO and multi-stakeholder meetings in Geneva and in regions, coordinated the drafting and delivery of collective NGO statements, and an important one is to share information relevant for NGOs notably through sharing notes of the briefings/meetings held in Geneva and online. ICVA have a dedicated mailing list designed to keep the NGO community informed of developments and collective actions related to the Global Compact on Refugees. It currently reaches about 250 NGO staff. Any NGO, RLO, even non-ICVA member is invited to join the list.

There are Monthly Consultations held online and organized by us, ICVA and UNHCR Partnership and Coordination Service with the aim for UNHCR and NGOs to exchange on operational, policy and advocacy priorities in a safe space. There were consultations with the GCR Team this year.

Other NGOs' stock-taking events can still take place, for instance on Statelessness and the implementation of pledges, new pledges, and the road ahead on 4 November.

An online NGOs stocktaking event was held on 20 October to reflect on the progress made so far in implementing the GRF pledges, particularly those from NGOs and RLOs, while also adopting a forward-looking standpoint, geared towards outlining early NGO recommendations for the 2023 GRF. One of the objectives of this event is to contribute to jointly drafting a collective NGO statement to be delivered in December at the High-Level Officials Meeting with the aim of outlining recommendations for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum. A zero draft will be shared ahead of the stocktaking event and there will be a dedicated timeline to feeding into the statement.

The three pledges that were made by NGOs in the regions under solutions: *Education above All* and *International Rescue Committee* with a joint pledge; *Health Development Consultancy Services* and other Sport committees and the *Young African Leaders Initiative*.

6. Discussions on practical example of NGOs contribution in the CRRF in WCA: Villagization in Chad

Myriam Valme Joseph, National Representative Chad Program, Lutheran World Relief

Lutheran World Federation has an MoU with UNHCR at a global level, and it works with refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities.

In LWF, there are three main areas of action in Chad: 1) Means of subsistence (Livelihoods); 2) Quality services (WASH, Disaster management. Environmental Protection and the promotion of renewable energy); 3) Protection and Social Cohesion (target groups).

Interventions are carried out at an individual level and at the community level. There is also an institutional level of work (working with technical structures, administrative structures).

The village approach covers deferent levels of humanitarian action, relief action, development initiatives. This approach is aimed at integrated programming to work with communities, and to build the capacity of the villages, including in refugee camps. LWF supports them technically and financially. New-commers LWF, together with the authorities in place mobilise and advocate for these persons so that they can get access to land and means of livelihood.

The village approach follows UNHCR strategy, which consists of integrating new refugees directly to host village. There is a lot of work done before POCs come in the villages.

Refugees are expected to respect all the rules concerning usage of the land and environmental protection. LWF work with all the local and technical services in the field to educate them on existing laws.

There's also an aspect of the approach where LWF sits down with the people of the village to reflect on their own problems, and they identify solutions themselves. LWF supports them to implement these solutions in villages, provides technical support and sometimes financial support.

This is a pilot project LWF hopes to organise with the support of UNICEF in October next year and to share this experience with different actors.

Summary of Recommendations and Action Points

The upcoming months are crucial to sustain momentum, deepen engagement, create new engagement as well as potential partnerships through existing tools and arrangements in the Compact as well as out of it.

Recommendations and expected way forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For UNHCR and ICVA: Host more exchanges on pledges with NGOs • For UNHCR: Advocate for and engage NGOs with the State for inclusion of forcibly displaced in the national development agenda • For UNHCR: Share pledges widely and integrate it in humanitarian programming through specific pledges in the HRPs or RRP. • For NGOs: Align programmes and pledges with host country policy pledges for Durable Solutions • For NGOs: Advocate for identifying and encouraging financial support to the host countries • For NGOs: Regularly report on progress
Top two quotes from the session:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In the near future, UNHCR believes that the time remaining between now and the next GRF should be used strategically, not only to implement the pledges, but also to pave the way for the Forum” - Aissatou Masseck Dieng-Ndiaye, UNHCR RBWCA Deputy Director • “Despite protracted and emergency situations characterized in the region in particular with internal displacement, there is a conducive environment in the region with hosting countries and regional entities willing to support access to Solutions in the region” - Loïse Daï Rocheteau, Policy Officer on Forced Migration at ICVA