

UN Women Global Refugee Forum Linked Event
Displacement through a Gender Lens: Progress, Challenges, and Advancing Partnerships
 Tuesday, 12 December 2023



Background: Conflicts and violence are widespread across the world, coupled with the increasing scale and frequency of climate-related disasters, the number of forcibly displaced people reached, 110 million people worldwide at the end of June 2023 due to persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations. The event emphasized the disproportionate effects of crises on women and girls, who constitute half of the displaced population. Discriminatory laws, increased care responsibilities, and heightened risks of gender-based violence underscore the urgent need for policies recognizing and treating displaced women and girls equally. The event discussed how to go beyond short-term humanitarian responses and advocate for long-term solutions that empower women and girls with education, skills development, and socio-economic integration tools.

The panel discussion with representatives from governments, women’s organizations, and women refugees, was organized by UN Women and co-hosted by Norway and Ukraine and moderated by Manisha Thomas from the Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC).

Three **key messages** emerged from the discussions:

1. Women-led Organizations and Women's Rights Organizations play an instrumental role in driving agendas for the empowerment and self-reliance of refugee women, including through inter-agency coordination mechanisms.
2. Existing as well as potential opportunities to scale up multi-stakeholder partnerships for socio-economic inclusion of women and girls applying intersectional and inclusive programmatic approaches should be seized and/or sustained.
3. Policy dialogues are critical to promoting and advocating for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls in forcibly displaced contexts.

Welcoming Remarks:

Tine Mørch Smith, Director General, Department of Multilateral Affairs, Norway:

Expressed Norway's support for the Global Refugee Forum's success in equitable burden-sharing in line with the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees. Emphasized the pivotal role of women as key actors for both short-term and long-term solutions, pledging to maintain a granular gender lens in all activities. Highlighted the need for gendered approaches across their partnerships. Norway supports programmes for displaced populations and host communities in the participating countries (Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Moldova, Uganda).



Yevheniia Filipenko, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the UN Office at Geneva: Stated that this event was an important opportunity to hear one another and engage directly as we pursue our common goal of advancing and empowering women, elevating their voices and participation in displacement responses, and achieving long-term solutions. Highlighted Ukraine's unique challenges, with 85 percent of adult refugees being women and stressed the need for a gender perspective in displacement responses and described the event as a crucial opportunity to pursue common goals in empowering women and achieving long-term solutions.

Panel Discussion 1 - Policy: Hearing from the country perspective:

Uganda - Asimwe Douglas, Commissioner for Refugees: Highlighted Uganda's efforts in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in refugee responses. Urged humanitarian actors to enhance their support and encouraged collaboration for advancing gender equality.

Jordan - Samia Smadi, Gender and Social Development Specialist: Shared Jordan's strategies, including work permits for refugees, efforts to reduce gender-based violence, and advocacy for women's inclusion in

negotiation and peace-building processes. Despite the country's limited resources, Jordan seeks to provide opportunities for decent livelihood to refugees, and access to education and health services. Jordan was also the first to include the issue of protecting refugee women and women from violence within its national plan to implement Resolution 1325.

Moldova – Dominika Stojanoska, UN Women Moldova Country Representative:

Showcased Moldova's unique response and how localization can strengthen the active and meaningful participation and engagement of refugees – particularly women refugees – through enhancement of their leadership and supporting local women's organizations through funding, capacity building and facilitating their input into humanitarian planning.



Kenya - Anna Mutavati, Representative UN Women Kenya: Spoke of initiatives for refugees' response in Kenya, including vocational and livelihood skills training, engagement with private organizations, and interagency coordination. Highlighted the importance of addressing negative norms and practices. The government of Kenya has developed the *Shirika Plan*, a pioneering approach for refugee management in Kenya, aimed at transforming the refugee camps into integrated settlements supporting the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees and hosting communities.

Panel Discussion 2 - Practice: Hearing from Women Leaders:

Colombia - Dayana Carolina Villalobos Molina, Women Leader from Nariño region: Shared her journey – from a refugee to a representative of a community organization and activist - and the impact of women's organizations supported by UN Women in Colombia. Women refugees organized together with women from host communities in Nariño. As “Guaguachama” (a mixed Colombian/Venezuelan term referring to women, girls and adolescents), their coming together as a collective gave them voice and influence to negotiate access and support for livelihoods.

Kenya - Makena Mworira, Managing Director INKOMOKO: Stressed the importance of micro and small businesses, especially those led by women and youth, and called for the creation of innovative pathways to economic development including refugee women. The private sector has a significant role to play in stimulating the local economy, providing economic opportunities for both forcibly displaced people and their host communities, particularly when they are hosted in remote locations characterized by thin markets.

Entrepreneurship, driven in part by private sector investments that support local businesses, could lead to the growth of a dynamic ecosystem of small and medium enterprises, fostering economic diversity and resilience.

Uganda - Robinah Rubimbwa, ED- Coalition for Action on 1325:

Highlighted the significance of localizing humanitarian interventions, the successes of engaging local frontline responders, and the challenges faced by CSOs, including unrealistic expectations and short-term funding. Local women- led CSOs need long-term flexible funding. Refugees who come to Uganda stay for years and decades. It is unrealistic to expect the CSO to achieve meaningful impact in six months or even one year. Robinah



stressed the importance of localisation further stating that “they already know the solutions they just need our help in facilitating them” referring to grassroots women.

Moldova - Olga Dymova, Ukrainian Local Refugee Coordinator: Shared her personal experience emphasizing the importance of involving refugee women as agents of change and their role in understanding the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls. Women’s organizations often have a grassroots presence in communities and can mobilize quickly to provide support in times of crisis. They are also more likely to have a gender-sensitive approach and to understand the specific needs and concerns of women and girls.

Jordan - Dr Marta Tarantino, Senior Research of The Renaissance Dialogue Strategic Center at ARDD: Stressed the importance of international and regional commitment, sustained investment in localization, and reinforcement of CSOs, particularly women-led organizations, in refugee response. Shared how Jordan has strongly included support to refugee women and host communities in key policy documents.

Closing Remarks:

- **Francesca Bonelli, UNHCR Moldova Representative:** Expressed gratitude to the co-hosts, Norway and Ukraine, and all contributors for enriching the collaborative dialogue. Underlined the disproportionate effects of crises on women and girls, emphasizing the need for comprehensive approaches linking humanitarian, development, and peace initiatives.
- **Osnat Lubrani, UN Women Geneva Director and Head of Humanitarian Section:** Commended the commitment of speakers and their contributions. Reiterated UN Women's dedication to addressing challenges posed by displacement, focusing on civil society, local organizations and strengthening resilience.

In **conclusion**, the event served as a powerful platform underscoring the instrumental role of women and girls in refugee response. The discussions advocated for gender-sensitive approaches, shedding light on the urgent need to address the disproportionate impact on women and girls in displacement settings. As we reflect on the valuable insights shared, the call for sustained collaboration echoes strongly. Together, we aspire to build a future where women and girls can rebuild their lives with unwavering dignity and resilience.



Social media links:

Norway in Geneva <https://x.com/NorwayInGeneva/status/1734549366101139760?s=20>

Coalition for Action 1325 <https://x.com/coact1325/status/1734986972358217872?s=20>

Marta Tarantino, ARDD <https://x.com/ThamarthaZ/status/1736365744231748017?s=20>

UN Women programming supports refugees worldwide <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/12/un-women-programming-supports-refugees-worldwide>

UN Women's Linked Gender Refugee Forum event discussed displacement through a gender lens

<https://x.com/unwomengeneva/status/1734611491452776914?s=20>

UN Women commits to support the end of gender discrimination in nationality laws

<https://x.com/unwomengeneva/status/1735366718640336958?s=20>

UN Women commit to scaling up efforts on GBV prevention, socio-economic inclusion and leadership of forcibly displaced women, in partnership with local actors

<https://x.com/unwomengeneva/status/1735035493497069930?s=20>