

## Guidance Note on meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in pledge implementation

This Note is intended to provide guidance and concrete examples for all stakeholders on how forcibly displaced and stateless people and the organizations they lead can be meaningfully involved in how pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) are implemented on the ground throughout the pledging cycle. It was developed based on the recommendations from, and experiences of, forcibly displaced and stateless participants in the GRF 2023.<sup>1</sup> Below is a summary of different ways all stakeholders can ensure meaningful refugee participation in implementing their pledge.

### Global level

At the global level, the primary channel for meaningful participation in pledge implementation, monitoring, stocktaking and evaluation is the thematic [multi-stakeholder pledge \(MSP\) framework](#) launched at the GRF 2023. Ideally, all MSPs should have a defined engagement mechanism in place (formal or informal) and work towards continuing and enhancing their existing engagement with displaced and stateless people in pledge efforts, or towards creating such engagement mechanisms where they do not yet exist.

### Examples of meaningful refugee participation in pledge implementation at the global level:

- Continued and meaningful participation in global, multi-stakeholder pledge core group meetings, stocktaking processes and other **strategic pledge-related events** (including quarterly GCR briefings, e.g., to represent pledges and deliver pledge updates);
- Participation in global processes and fora relevant to forced displacement and the GCR/GRF pledge implementation;
- Contributions to the development of **pledge implementation plans and roadmaps**;
- Support in the **analysis of pledges** and the joint **definition of appropriate follow-up mechanisms**, including, where applicable, monitoring, stocktaking and evaluation frameworks using concrete indicators;
- Engagement in advocacy efforts for pledge matching and partner mobilization by existing global-level refugee advisory mechanisms, such as the [Advisory Board](#) to the UNHCR [Task Team](#) on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons, the [Refugee Advisory Group](#) to the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, or the Refugee Expert Group to the [UN Common Pledge 2.0](#).
- Reporting **on progress made in pledge implementation** alongside all other stakeholders through stocktaking processes, if acting as a pledging entity in their own right, and/or reporting on pledges made by or in support of the country of asylum they are residing in;
- Contributions to the stocktaking of progress made towards pledge implementation two years into the process, at the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) 2025, **to evaluate, refine, make necessary adaptations** to pledge implementation based on assessments and feedback received from participants.

### Promising practices to build on:

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<sup>1</sup> These recommendations were captured in online debrief sessions conducted post-GRF as well as a detailed GRF 2023 participation evaluation survey filled in by GRF participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness. It is also informed by post-GRF reports prepared by organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons. See, for example: R-SEAT. "[We were seen, but were we heard?](#)" [Meaningful refugee participation at the Global Refugee Forum 2023: An assessment by R-SEAT.](#)" July 2024.

A refugee youth leader from South Sudan, Ms. Monicah Malith, spoke in the opening ceremony of the Summit of the Future alongside the UN Secretary-General, as well as in a side event at the Summit which spoke to the way the Pact for the Future and the GCR are mutually reinforcing in their ambition to advance on refugee inclusion, including in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The event, which also featured Ms. Anila Noor, Founder of women refugee led-organization New Women Connectors and Spokesperson of the Action Network on Forced Displacement, featured multiple multi-stakeholder pledges that contribute to Actions of the Pact.

## Regional level

At the regional level, meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons and their organizations in GCR processes, including pledge implementation and stocktaking, can be promoted through the regional/situational MSPs and/or GCR [Support Platforms](#). Engagement can also be encouraged through existing mechanisms being used to advance the GCR at regional level, such as regional or sub-regional political mechanisms, UN coordination mechanisms, or other platforms.

### Situational/regional multi-stakeholder pledges and related Support Platforms:

#### Asia-Pacific:

- [Rohingya Refugees - Expanded Resilience, Enhanced Solutions](#)
- [ReResolve - for Resilience and Solutions, a Pledge for the Afghanistan Situation](#) (Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees ([SSAR](#)) Support Platform)

#### Africa:

- [Beyond Borders, Beyond Barriers - Delivering Comprehensive Solutions in the IGAD Region](#) (Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa Support Platform)
- [Together Against the Tide - Climate Action for Displaced Communities in the IGAD Region](#) (IGAD Support Platform)
- [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#) Support Platform

#### Americas:

- [Cartagena+40 – Chile Declaration and Plan of Action](#)
- [MIRPS - Strengthening Asylum Systems](#) (MIRPS Support Platform)
- [MIRPS - Integration](#) (MIRPS Support Platform)
- [MIRPS - Local Governance](#) (MIRPS Support Platform)

Examples of regional and sub-regional political or other mechanisms where meaningful refugee participation can be mobilized to support pledge implementation:

#### Asia-Pacific:

- [ASEAN](#)
- Almaty Process

#### Africa:

- African Union
- ECOWAS
- SADC

### Examples of meaningful refugee participation in pledge implementation at the regional level:

- Participation in all **strategic pledge-related meetings and events** at the regional level;
- Contributions to the development of regional/situational **pledge implementation plans**, if applicable;

- Support the **analysis of commitments** made and joint **definition of appropriate follow-up mechanisms**, including, where applicable, stocktaking and monitoring and evaluation frameworks (concrete indicators);
- Where possible, establishment of more formalized **regional refugee advisory mechanisms** to the GCR Support Platforms or regional multi-stakeholder pledges;
- Participation in all **regional stocktaking** to review progress made towards pledge implementation to evaluate, refine, and make necessary adaptations based on assessments and feedback received from participants.

#### Promising practices to build on:

**East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes:** In its IGAD-East African Community Ministerial [Declaration](#) on Durable Solutions for Refugees in the East and Horn of Africa Region of 16 June 2023, **IGAD** Member States committed to advancing meaningful refugee participation by ensuring that “refugees and host communities participate in governance of refugee response plans and structures” and “advanc(ing) the localization agenda by fostering engagement with ... Refugee-Led Organizations and increasing budgetary support” (p.5). IGAD not only supported refugee participation in related regional fora such as the African Climate Summit 2023 in Nairobi, but also ensured refugee participation in the 2023 Annual Ministerial Stocktaking Meeting of the IGAD Support Platform and implementation of the Plan of Action for the Nairobi Declaration. Refugee representatives actively participated in these discussions, including on the two abovementioned regional pledges put forth by IGAD at the GRF 2023.

**Americas:** In the ongoing implementation phase of the multi-stakeholder pledge [Cartagena+40 – Chile Declaration and Plan of Action](#), for the first time ever, organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons have systematically participated in all three thematic consultations of the Cartagena +40 process in 2024, informing the negotiation phase for the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action 2024-34. The participation efforts are spearheaded by the “Grupo de Articulación de Organizaciones Lideradas por personas Refugiadas o desplazadas a la fuerza (RLOs) de Latinoamérica y el Caribe” (GARLOS LATAM y Caribe), a network of over 100 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons from various countries of the region. In each consultation, five RLO representatives presented their thematic recommendations based on the organization’s thematic area of expertise. In line with the objective of *sustained* participation, several of the 70 refugee experts who participated in the GRF 2023 are among the RLO representatives influencing the Cartagena +40 process.

In addition to the Cartagena +40 process, the MIRPS Support Platform is in discussions about the potential establishment of a regional advisory mechanism to the MIRPS Secretariat, comprising of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in MIRPS countries.

#### National level

At the country level, meaningful refugee participation in pledge implementation ideally is embedded in an existing refugee participation/advisory mechanism, building on previous engagement in pledge development processes. Such mechanisms can be found in different forms, including State-established or supported refugee advisory mechanisms established to advise government entities (e.g., in Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, Uganda, and the United States of America) and mechanisms that advise UNHCR Country Operations (e.g., in Bulgaria, Ireland, and Malaysia), or hybrid forms, as well as mechanisms that are established at the local level – e.g. refugee councils in Belgium – created outside the scope of the GCR but which can also be used as mechanisms for pledge follow up.

Additionally, displaced and stateless people and their organizations can engage in advocacy- and accountability-related activities aimed at pledge implementation.

### Examples of meaningful refugee participation in pledge implementation at the national level:

Following dedicated **debrief sessions** post-GRF 2023, refugee advisors from national mechanisms and other refugee representatives are well equipped to make contributions to pledge implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This can be achieved through:

- Participating in relevant national-level government-led and multi-stakeholder **pledge follow-up and stocktaking meetings**;
- Where applicable, ensuring displaced and stateless people (ideally through advisory mechanisms) are represented and able to make substantial contributions in **governance structures overseeing pledge implementation**;
- Jointly **defining the appropriate follow-up process**, including contributions to national **pledge implementation frameworks and plans**;
- **Representing a multi-stakeholder pledge or pledge(s) made by a certain government in regional or global-level discussions and events** (e.g., providing the pledge update at the quarterly GCR briefings, or in multi-stakeholder pledge groups (co)-led by a certain State);
- Engaging in **advocacy efforts** for relevant pledges, urging States or other pledging entities to implement their commitments, including through **pledge matching/mobilization of partners**;
- Contributing to **monitoring and stocktaking frameworks, definition and tracking of indicators**, and overall processes in the lead-up to the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) 2025 **to evaluate, refine, make necessary adaptations** based on assessments and feedback received from participants;
- Developing a dedicated “**meaningful refugee participation strategy for follow-up sessions** to the GRF, such as the High-Level Officials Meeting in 2025” as recommended for States by refugee-led organizations such as Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table ([R-SEAT](#)).
- Meaningful refugee participation can also **flow across national, regional and global levels** (such as in the case of the Cartagena+40 multi-stakeholder pledge).

### Good practices to build on:

At the GRF 2023, 14 States included one or more refugees in their official government delegation, many assuming the role of refugee advisors through the established national advisory body. In total, 23 refugee representatives participated as part of 14 delegations, constituting a significant increase from the first GRF 2019, which saw one State, Canada, attend with a refugee advisor. States that have established national refugee advisory mechanisms included refugee advisors from these respective bodies in their GRF 2023 delegations. During the GRF 2023, three new States – Brazil, Germany, and Switzerland – committed to creating refugee advisory mechanisms at the national level. While this is a promising trend aimed at ensuring expertise-based and sustained engagement in national policy-making processes, representatives of existing advisory mechanisms reported that, while they are well-equipped to participate in all phases of the pledging process, the full potential of participation in the preparations for the GRF 2023 (defining thematic pledging priorities, developing pledging frameworks and plans, mobilization, etc.) was not always fully realized.

## Annex I: Meaningful refugee participation throughout the pledge cycle

### Background and contextualization

Guided by paragraph 34 of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which underscores that “responses are most effective when they actively and meaningfully engage” the people UNHCR works for and with, meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in GCR implementation (meaningful refugee participation) is a strategic priority. It has the potential to lead to more sustainable, needs-driven, and inclusive responses that benefit from the expertise and experience of refugees and stateless people and the organizations they lead.

One of the GCR’s major avenues to develop new, long-term solutions is the [Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\) pledging process and cycle](#). While significant progress was made in engaging forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the GRF 2023 <sup>2[66]</sup> and there is an agreement on the need to continue this engagement in pledge implementation and monitoring processes from a normative perspective, more efforts are required to enable and deliver on meaningful participation in the pledge implementation, stocktaking and reporting process leading up to the High Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) 2025.

### *What roles can forcibly displaced and stateless people play in the pledging process?*

- **Advisory and thematic expert role:** Forcibly displaced and stateless persons often come with thematic expertise that is directly relevant to different pledges and initiatives, making them well-suited to act as pledge advisors, contributing to the development of concrete pledges from the onset, providing recommendations and reviewing key pledge-related documents and commitments.

For example, refugee experts engaged in the [Sport for Inclusion and Protection](#) multi-stakeholder pledge in the lead-up to the GRF 2023 reviewed the commitments received from actors from the sports world or working through sport that were developing the pledge, and contributed to establishing its reporting process and leading on its mobilization. Also, the localization multi-stakeholder pledge had refugees in each working group developing the commitments and the reference group guiding the process.

- **Pledge implementing partner or co-pledging entity:** Organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons can also act in the capacity of a pledge implementing partner, or a co-pledging entity. Such roles are particularly relevant for pledge matching, for example, if a government or other stakeholder wishes to fund activities that can be carried out by an organization led by forcibly displaced and stateless people.

For example, the Government of Germany, in partnership with the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund, pledged to support women refugee-led organizations that “focus on preventing and responding to climate-related conflicts and injustice.”

For example, the joint pledge on "Advancing displaced women’s political, economic, and social participation and leadership for gender equality" of The Lotus Flower and New Women Connectors with Germany and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

- **Pledging entity:** In some instances, forcibly displaced and stateless people and the organizations they lead assume the role of pledging entities in their own right. They may

<sup>2</sup> For example, 21 [multi-stakeholder pledges](#) benefited from direct contributions by forcibly displaced and stateless persons who participated as **pledge advisors**, reviewing key documents such as pledging guidance, frameworks, and commitments, participating in core group and other meetings, and co-designing or representing the pledge in related events and discussions; or as **pledging entities/pledge implementing partners**.



submit individual pledges on behalf of an organization or as part of the leadership structure of a multi-stakeholder pledge.

For example, the Refugee Engagement Forum Uganda submitted a pledge, and the Netherlands-based RLO Cultuur in Harmonie is part of the leadership structure of the [Family Reunification](#) multi-stakeholder pledge.

- **Skills-based partnership:** Forcibly displaced and stateless persons can also be engaged in pledge efforts through skills-based partnerships, e.g., by utilizing or supporting refugee-led research to inform pledge development or implementation. They can also collaborate with refugee journalists/graphic designers/videographers in the preparation of pledge-related communication and reporting products.

For example, the GRF 2023 refugee experts engaged in the [Economic Inclusion and Social Protection](#) multi-stakeholder pledge produced a refugee-led video product featuring refugee leaders on the importance of economic inclusion, used for GRF communication purposes.

- **Mobilizers and pledge ambassadors:** Forcibly displaced and stateless people and their organizations often dispose of significant mobilizing power and valuable connections with different stakeholders that are of potential interest to pledging entities. Several of the GRF 2023 participants with lived experience were mobilized for pledges they contributed their expertise to, for example where pledge leads were interested in expanding their partnerships in a particular region or country. They were also often requested to speak on behalf of a pledge, giving them visibility in fora/events at global, regional or national levels.

For example, the multi-stakeholder pledge on legal assistance by PiINET sought to expand partnerships in Latin America and worked in partnership with the Asociación de Nicaragüenses en México.

For example, the localization multi-stakeholder pledge was announced by an Bondeko, an RLO from Uganda, in plenary during the GRF 2023.

- **Advocacy and accountability:** Forcibly displaced and stateless people and the organizations they lead are uniquely placed to engage in advocacy efforts aiming to hold pledging entities accountable to their GRF commitments.

For example, the Refugee Engagement Forum in Uganda ensures a constant flow of information and feedback between refugee communities at all administrative levels and government counterparts, notably on GRF 2023 preparations.

- **Community outreach:** Organizations and initiatives led by displaced and stateless people are often best positioned to enable a two-way communication channel to allow for feedback on pledging priorities and objectives, implementation and results, and need for adjustments or course correction. Such two-way feedback mechanisms render the pledge development and implementation process more inclusive and needs-driven.
- **Data collection, dissemination and analysis:** The GCR Indicator Report supports the Compact's practical implementation, follow-up and review process, highlighting areas of progress and exposing challenges in implementing its four objectives. The Report's internationally comparable data can help inform how pledges could be implemented efficiently by providing insights on prioritization and focus, informing tailored strategies and transparent metrics to track the progress of the pledges. In this regard, meaningful refugee participation should be considered in the entire life data cycle: in the identification of data needs; during data collection (for example, participation of refugees and RLOs through focus group discussions, hiring of refugee data collectors);

and in the use, analysis and dissemination of data. Meaningful refugee participation in data and evidence processes should enhance the reliability and relevance of the collected data.

For example, refugee returnees were engaged as enumerators during the [2023 Results Monitoring Surveys \(RMS\) implementation in Burundi](#). Their language capacity and lived experience helped the other enumerators better connect with refugees and returnee interviewers. The data collected provided evidence to inform programmes in Burundi to support reintegration of refugee returnees in country and improve the situation for refugees.

**The above non-exhaustive list of roles that forcibly displaced and stateless persons can assume are applicable to all phases of the GCR pledging cycle.**

## Annex II: Overarching principles

- **Build on existing mechanisms:** When identifying refugees to be engaged in pledge development, implementation, and follow-up, it is recommended to build on and strengthen existing engagement mechanisms, rather than developing new ones. For example, if a State has a national refugee advisory board in place, consider exploring engagement options through this channel rather than identifying a new cohort of individuals. This includes leveraging existing community-based protection and accountability mechanisms.
- **Thematic expertise:** Ensure that participants are identified in a transparent process that is based on the thematic and/or situational expertise and knowledge that they add to the subject matter in question.
- **Diversity considerations:** When a group of participants is selected, engage people with lived experience in the development of the selection mechanism and ensure that different age groups, gender and ethnic identities, and types of lived experience are represented.
- **Access to information:** Provide access to all relevant documents and information relevant for the pledge(s) to ensure participants are well-equipped to make meaningful contributions. If needed, this includes making information available in different languages and formats.
- **Predictability of participation:** Establish clear timelines and concrete deliverables to ensure predictability, planning, and tangible outcomes of participation.
- **Sustained participation:** Ideally, the same participants are engaged in all phases of the pledging cycle, i.e., over an extended period of time, allowing for continuity and sustained participation. This means that the individuals who contributed their thematic knowledge to the development of a pledge are best placed to also shape the follow-up process, pledge implementation plan and stocktaking. Ideally, participants contribute throughout at least one full GRF cycle, e.g., from the preparations for the GRF 2023, through the stocktaking at the HLOM 2025 to the refinement and development of adjusted pledges for the GRF 2027.
- **Communication:** Establish clear and transparent communication channels with participants, ensuring that feedback and suggestions are addressed in a timely manner. Build on existing information channels from previous engagements to ensure input has been taken into account. Explain how input will influence the work. If certain suggestions

made by participants are not feasible, explain why recommendations cannot be addressed to ensure accountability.

- **Measuring impact:** Document the process, meetings/discussions, and feedback provided by participants, ensuring evidence and evaluating the process of participation.
- **Unique nature and contributions of meaningful refugee participation:** Many experts with lived experience of forced displacement or statelessness are volunteers and provide time, knowledge and expertise on top of other professional activities and family/care responsibilities. In ensuring that refugee participation is meaningful, stakeholders should be sensitive to the different realities often faced by such volunteers, including low connectivity, use of older electronic devices, absence of quiet place to connect from, emergency contexts, etc. Ensure to embrace the concept of mutual collaboration and capacity sharing (hence learning from their expertise as well) and acknowledging the effort they contribute, which is often uncompensated. Ensure refugee expertise is recognized, when possible, such as by making reference to them and/or their organization and offering a platform for their visibility (e.g. [Refugee Women Experts flyer](#) for the Gender Multi-Stakeholder Pledge); offering networking opportunities and collaborative spaces, access to capacity strengthening opportunities, etc.
- **Language barriers:** Also, reliance on English language and use of jargon can constitute barriers to diverse and meaningful refugee participation, hence important to recognize the diversity of languages and the use of different terminology.