



## TOWARDS INFLUENCE:

HOW FORCIBLY DISPLACED AND  
STATELESS PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN THE  
GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PROGRESS REVIEW

2025

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# At a glance

## Meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) Progress Review 2025 process

### Participation in preparations ahead of the GRF Progress Review 2025

- ▶ Over 130 leaders with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness, including local actors, completed a [six-week training programme](#) to equip them with essential tools and knowledge to effectively navigate the GRF Progress Review, through a collaboration between Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT), the International Institute of Humanitarian Law (Sanremo Institute), and UNHCR's Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) Section.
- ▶ Organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people actively participated in all four [GRF Progress Review preparatory meetings in 2025](#), often representing their thematic pledges.
- ▶ In July 2025, over 50 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people participated in two programme consultations and a survey, sharing their views on themes, modalities, and other recommendations for the Progress Review.
- ▶ 160 forcibly displaced and stateless delegates to the GRF Progress Review participated in an in-person orientation day co-organized with the [Advisory Board](#) to UNHCR's Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons (Advisory Board).
- ▶ The consultative drafting process of the [Global Refugee Statement](#), led by the Advisory Board, benefitted from direct inputs of 96 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people through multilingual online discussions and a written feedback tool.
- ▶ Currently, of the [47 multi-stakeholder pledges](#), 27 include participation mechanisms for forcibly displaced and stateless people and refugee-led organizations (RLOs), 19 include pledges made by RLOs, and 9 benefit from RLOs as official co-leads of the pledges.
- ▶ Pledge stocktaking was carried out together with those with lived experience, and several GRF Progress Review thematic events were co-developed with speakers selected through these mechanisms, ensuring sustained engagement from the GRF 2023 through to the GRF Progress Review 2025.
- ▶ Regional and national stocktaking exercises took place through mechanisms such as GARLOS in Latin America and IGAD in Eastern Africa. In addition, meaningful participation was supported by UNHCR Regional Bureaux and country offices, which organized consultations and preparatory sessions with participants.

## Meaningful participation during the GRF Progress Review 2025

- ▶ 260 participants had lived experience, the highest percentage of participants with lived experience ever in a Global Compact on Refugees event (17.5 per cent out of the total number of 1,486 participants).
- ▶ Financial contributions from Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland enabled UNHCR to sponsor 127 forcibly displaced and stateless people, representatives of the organizations they lead, and other local actors to participate in the GRF Progress Review 2025.
- ▶ Seven State delegations included refugee advisors and shared speaking time with them during the event, including Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom in plenary.
- ▶ During the opening ceremony, Nour Jarrouj (Moving Minds Alliance), member of the Advisory Board, delivered the Global Refugee Statement, calling on governments and international actors to uphold refugee protection laws and move from rhetoric to concrete, well-funded action by making refugees equal partners in decision-making and funding.
- ▶ In her opening statement, Zakia Khudadadi shared her journey as a former Afghan refugee and Paralympic athlete, highlighting the transformative power of sport and education in fostering resilience and calling for continued international support to uphold their rights and opportunities.
- ▶ For the first time, 100 per cent of the 27 side events and spotlight sessions featured speakers with lived experience, including 46 speakers sharing their thematic expertise and contributions.
- ▶ A dedicated side event was organized with the co-leads of the [Multi-Stakeholder Pledge on Meaningful Refugee Participation](#). The event had around 280 attendees and highlighted how meaningful participation improves policy effectiveness and legitimacy, but progress remains uneven, requiring systemic reforms, predictable long-term funding, and legal frameworks to move to genuine co-leadership.
- ▶ 29 per cent of all plenary opening, closing and pledge announcement speakers were people with lived experience, putting them on par with government speakers.
- ▶ The [Speakers' Corner](#) was a space fully dedicated to 11 leaders with lived experience from different regions, who gave presentations on their work and initiatives.
- ▶ [Linked events](#) across Geneva included the [R-Space](#), a refugee-led venue that ran in parallel to the Progress Review, which provided a platform to share community-driven solutions and dialogue towards solutions driven by affected communities.
- ▶ The closing ceremony included a refugee dialogue on progress, challenges, and recommendations on the way towards promoting more meaningful participation, featuring the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, Cecile Losamandjo Pango (Women for Action), Krista Rivas (Tertiary Refugee Student Network – TRSN – for Latin America), and Majdi Laktinah (Refugee Advisory Board Germany, member of the German delegation), moderated by Monicah Malith (TRSN).

## Meaningful participation in GRF Progress Review 2025 follow-up

- ▶ After the GRF Progress Review, from January to February 2026, UNHCR and participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness undertook a joint evaluation to capture lessons learned and inform the way forward. This comprised regional debrief sessions and a written evaluation survey, assessing the scope, quality and impact of meaningful participation.

### Key findings include:

- ✔ Sustained engagement: 92.8 per cent of the respondents wish to remain engaged in follow-up processes with 75.4 per cent planning to use learnings for their advocacy plans and 55.1 per cent to engage in the pledge framework at regional and country levels.
- ✔ Participation in preparations: Meaningful participation in the event's preparatory process continues to be strongest at global level and weakest at national level, but with significant increase at the regional level.
- ✔ Progress since 2023: Respondents noted that participation has become more institutionalized, visible and consistent across the GRF cycle, with increased access through advisory boards, better inclusion of refugee advisors in State delegations and greater engagement in multi-stakeholder pledges and regional processes.
- ✔ Persistent gaps: While access and consistency have improved, respondents highlighted some remaining gaps between participation and influence, as well as the need to ensure continued participation.
- ✔ GRF 2027 in-person participant selection modality: 87 per cent are in favour of a mixed modality, combining experienced participants to maintain knowledge, consistency and networks, with new participants to broaden perspectives and ensure accessibility.

### The way ahead:

- ▶ Based on these findings, priorities in the GCR process going forward include continued or strengthened refugee engagement in pledge implementation at global, regional, and national levels; a learning series for refugee-led organizations (RLOs) on meaningful engagement in pledging; and development of a joint meaningful participation roadmap leading to 2027 as part of a four-year vision.
- ▶ Efforts to address barriers to participation, such as language, digital divides, visa restrictions, and unequal access to funding, will continue.
- ▶ A new cycle is beginning next year: UNHCR is promoting a long-term vision on meaningful participation in GCR implementation, with the GRF and Progress Review representing global milestones as part of a multi-level process spanning an entire four-year cycle. UNHCR aims to work with the current cohort of participants and others interested to develop the strategic planning for the 2027-2031 cycle and will explore ways to further embed forcibly displaced and stateless people and the organizations they lead in the GCR mechanisms and beyond.

# Analytical framing

This report presents a comprehensive overview of how forcibly displaced and stateless people participated in the GRF Progress Review 2025. It draws primarily on self-reported information from UNHCR, partners, organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, and participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness, capturing several important dimensions of progress. This covers access, representation, visibility, engagement across the GRF cycle, and increasing institutional access points. These are necessary foundations and indicators for meaningful participation, and against which to benchmark and measure the influence on outcomes that people with lived experience and the organizations they lead have in the GCR process. This could include how forcibly displaced and stateless people shape agendas, influence decisions, and how such participation mechanisms contribute to shift power. The ability to exercise influence depends on early and continuous engagement in agenda-setting, defined decision-making roles, transparent and accountable feedback loops, institutionalized participation mechanisms, flexible and sustained funding, and safeguards that prevent tokenism. As such, this report identifies where progress towards influence is emerging, where it remains uneven, and where further reform is needed.



# I. Lead-up to the GRF Progress Review 2025

## Sustained participation across the GRF cycle (2023-2027)

The second Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in 2023 marked a turning point for meaningful refugee participation. Not only was the number of participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness significantly higher than at the GRF 2019, but the substance of participation also evolved. Refugees were engaged as subject-matter experts in all the phases of the GRF, from shaping pledges as advisors, co-leads or pledging entities in their own right and sharing their experience in high-level events to advocating for refugee issues with world leaders.

While significant progress has been made, systemic and logistical barriers to participation persist. These range from visa and travel document issues, language barriers, lack of funding, insufficient access to information, and power imbalances, to broader contextual conditions that enable meaningful participation, including the level of civil liberties and the degree to which civil society space is restricted.

Some of the main lessons learned from the GRF 2023 follow-up process with forcibly displaced and stateless participants showed that:

- Participation was enhanced through the substantive orientation and onboarding process, including UNHCR's online training series and the orientation day co-organized with the [Advisory Board](#).
- The safe space available for participants with lived experience, which was piloted for the first time, provided vital mental health, psycho-social support, and protection services.
- Collaboration with the Advisory Board on a dedicated side event on meaningful participation and the 2023 Joint Refugee Statement enhanced participation as well as visibility and multi-stakeholder engagement.

One of the key takeaways was the need to sustain participation over time, shifting from a focus on specific events to the broader policy process under the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Additional recommendations included prioritizing the quality of participation over the number of participants; ensuring fair and equal participation opportunities for all participants whether representing organizations or participating in an individual capacity; and initiating participation support processes earlier to reduce barriers. Building on those recommendations from participants, UNHCR actively engaged forcibly displaced and stateless people before, during, and after the GRF Progress Review 2025 while also nurturing longer-term engagement for participants in the GCR mechanisms. The selection modality prioritized sustained participation to enable engagement throughout the entire four-year cycle from the GRF 2023 to the upcoming GRF in 2027<sup>1</sup>, while balancing representation of marginalized groups and regional diversity considerations.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, around 35 of the individual experts that joined the Progress Review returned since being part of the original group of "70 refugee experts" identified for the [GRF in 2023](#). Other former 70 expert participants were reinvited as organizations they have formed in the meantime, while the rest are no longer actively engaged.

## Critical support from partners

Financial contributions from Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland supported meaningful refugee participation in the GCR implementation in 2025 and enabled UNHCR to sponsor 127 forcibly displaced and stateless people, representatives of the organizations they lead, and other local actors to participate in the GRF Progress Review 2025. The majority of the selected individuals and organizations have been engaged in GCR processes and pledges since the GRF 2023, in the spirit of sustained participation. This support also enabled critical advocacy and engagement with States and other stakeholders to include forcibly displaced and stateless people in their delegations, building on good practices observed at the GRFs in 2019 and 2023.

## Progress towards the GCR Objectives: Meaningful participation in stocktaking

At the midway point between Forums, the GCR community embarked on a stocktaking process to evaluate progress made towards implementing the GCR and fulfilling GRF pledges, at global, regional, and national levels. Participation in the GCR pledge framework has been highlighted as one of the most impactful aspects of refugee participants' engagement. To enable this, UNHCR promotes meaningful participation across all phases of the pledging cycle: from pledge development to implementation and stocktaking leading up to the GRF Progress Review, adjusted implementation afterwards, and renewed pledge development ahead of the next GRF.

This is captured in a [guidance issued by UNHCR in 2024](#) that builds on good practices from the GCR community which can be replicated to further enhance meaningful participation across the pledging mechanism. Stocktaking leading up to the Progress Review 2025 saw an increase in participation in the pledge process at different levels. More attention is needed to move from inclusion and engagement in the pledge development phase to close collaboration with people with lived experience across the pledge cycle.

Currently, at the global level, 27 out of [47 multi-stakeholder pledges](#) engage people with lived experiences or their organizations in their pledge architecture – some through formal advisory mechanisms, such as the [Refugee Advisory Group to the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways \(CRCP\)](#), some through co-leadership of a pledge, such as the refugee-led organization (RLO) [Bondeko Refugee Livelihoods Center](#), which co-leads the [Localization Multi-stakeholder Pledge](#), and others through less formalized reference or advisory groups. For example, the Multi-stakeholder Pledge [Achieving 15 per cent Enrolment by 2030 \(15by30\) to Expanding Refugee Access to Higher Education and Self-Reliance](#), which includes in its leadership the Tertiary Refugee Student Network (TRSN) and the Refugee Led Research Hub, ensures that refugee, youth and student leadership are present in every aspect of pledge implementation and stocktaking.

Numerous student bodies have pledged to advance 15by30 and in doing so have motivated and advocated with Member States, businesses and universities worldwide to recognize the need to expand access to higher education as a critical means to harness the wealth of talent and potential of the world's millions of refugees and displaced people.

## Regional and national stocktaking engagement

In the Americas, the [Chile Declaration and Plan of Action 2024-2034](#) established meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people as a cross-cutting principle<sup>2</sup> and called for the creation of a follow-up network led by refugees, which has since been established and has actively contributed throughout the Cartagena+40 Process. Its involvement in the Support Platform of the [Follow-Up and Coordination Mechanism of the Chile Plan of Action](#), as well as in the implementation and monitoring of its actions, represents an opportunity to mobilize further support.

In Eastern and Southern Africa, the Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was launched as a regional engagement platform in November 2024 to further institutionalize refugee participation in regional policy processes, including regional multi-stakeholder pledges on [Solutions](#) and on [Climate Action](#). The REF contributed to the [regional stocktaking meeting](#) convened by the IGAD Secretariat in Djibouti on 4 November 2025 to jointly review progress made in implementing GRF 2023 pledges.

The NGO [Independent Diplomat \(ID\)](#) conducted a stocktaking exercise ahead of the GRF Progress Review, holding regional roundtables in Eastern and Southern Africa and MENA regions to assess progress and challenges in advancing refugee leadership and localization. The findings revealed that, across both regions, refugees and RLOs are often the first responders and are taking on growing responsibilities as funding shrinks and UN reforms push for localization. However, these organizations still lack the legal recognition, safe operating spaces, decision-making power, and access to direct multi-year funding to lead effectively. Recommendations called for easier registration and banking access for RLOs, real influence in coordination and policy spaces, and simpler, more transparent funding mechanisms that channel resources directly to refugee-led organizations (see the [Global Synthesis Report 2025](#)).

At the country level, different forms of national refugee advisory mechanisms are key platforms to enable meaningful participation in stocktaking processes. For example, in the lead-up to the GRF Progress Review 2025, the [New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel \(NZRAP\)](#) was involved in the stocktaking process examining progress across seven New Zealand government pledges, alongside engagement with multi-stakeholder pledge leads to support alignment between government and community commitments.<sup>3</sup>

In other contexts, such as the Republic of Korea, the GRF Progress Review 2025 was preceded by a national [Refugee Forum](#), bringing together a total of 167 participants, including 40 refugees. A dedicated Refugee Reference Group shaped the entire planning process of the Forum, demonstrating how the goals of inclusion and meaningful participation outlined in the GCR and GRF are being put into practice in Korea, and recommending the Group serve as a practical channel to centre refugee voices in national policy dialogues.



<sup>2</sup> By adopting the Chile Declaration, States "recognize that the participation of refugees, displaced and stateless persons, including women and girls, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of protection and solutions policies that concern them is crucial, and that it is an indispensable condition for these to be effective and sustainable."

<sup>3</sup> University of Auckland. *NZRAP Engagement at the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review 2025*, 10 Jan. 2026, [www.caprs.auckland.ac.nz/nzrap-engagement-at-the-global-refugee-forum-progress-review-2025/](http://www.caprs.auckland.ac.nz/nzrap-engagement-at-the-global-refugee-forum-progress-review-2025/).

## RLO consultations on the programme

Following consultations held with the [Advisory Board](#) on Progress Review preparations and participation, the Board and UNHCR facilitated two online consultations with the broader RLO community in July 2025 to gather input to inform the design of the event programme. A total of 67 participants, including individuals and representatives from 52 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, shared perspectives on programme themes and modalities, as well as other recommendations. The consultations were accompanied by a survey soliciting written submissions to receive quantitative information about the content of the consultation. The top five thematic priorities identified in those consultations (pledge framework and matching; Support Platforms; leveraging regional institutions; economic inclusion; inclusion in national systems) featured in the final programme. Calls for a focus on emerging situations were integrated as well, such as events on the Syria situation and Lomé Dialogue. The findings from the post-Progress Review survey show that participants recommend modalities that allow for participatory and interactive formats, such as workshops that complemented formal side events.



*"I really felt that the programme took into account what we had shared during the consultations... I felt listened to and taken into account, and it was encouraging to see several issues discussed that aligned with inputs shared at the regional level."*

– Refugee participant in the evaluation survey

## Refugee-led advocacy in all GCR briefings

All four quarterly formal preparatory meetings to discuss progress towards the implementation of the GCR, related pledges, and the preparations for the GRF Progress Review 2025 saw active participation of representatives of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people. The global [Advisory Board](#) delivered statements with recommendations to all stakeholders at each briefing while other RLOs, some of which represent different multi-stakeholder pledges, delivered key updates and strategic recommendations.

First quarterly preparatory meeting for the GRF Progress Review 2025 on 10 March 2025

**Lourena Gboeah** from [Refugee Congress](#) on behalf of the global Advisory Board highlighted the increase in refugee leadership and the importance of continuing to champion meaningful participation of refugees and refugee-led organizations as equal partners in shaping solutions. She called for concrete steps to close gaps in meaningful refugee participation, urging stakeholders to involve refugees as experts and contributors in policy discussions.

Amid the alarming rise in forced displacement, the Advisory Board highlighted the negative impact of a rapid and largely unsupported shift in global humanitarian responsibilities falling on RLOs, who rely on humanitarian funding and are essential first responders. They called on humanitarian actors and States to prioritize RLOs in their efforts to support displaced and stateless communities. (*Full statement [here](#)*).



Lourena Gboeah

## Second quarterly preparatory meeting on 24 June 2025

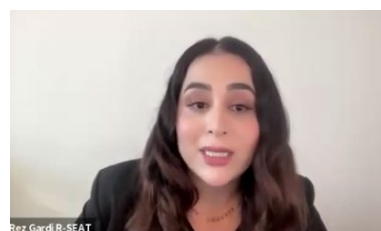
**Najeeba Wazefadost** from Asia Pacific Network of Refugees ([APNOR](#)), one of the co-leads of the [Multi-stakeholder Pledge](#) on Meaningful Refugee Participation, stressed that meaningful refugee participation must remain at the centre of the discussions leading to the GRF Progress



Review 2025 and be embedded across the pledging process. As some pledging entities have an uneven understanding of what constitutes meaningful refugee participation, leading to varied reporting, she stressed the need for practical guidance the MSP aims to develop.

**Rez Gardi** from Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table ([R-SEAT](#)), on behalf of the Advisory Board, highlighted progress in refugee participation since the GRF 2023, including engagement in pledges, state delegations, establishment of refugee advisory boards and contribution to UNHCR processes.

She noted that participation remains fragile, especially amid global crises and shrinking humanitarian funding, rendering increased efforts to promote meaningful participation more important than ever. She called for institutionalizing refugee participation, increased investment in RLOs, and ensuring displaced people co-lead solutions under the GCR, as well as in emerging areas such as the sustainable responses approach. (*Full statement [here](#)*).



**Rebecca Ahaadi** from the [Action Network on Forced Displacement](#), a global network of women leaders created as part of Germany's GRF pledges, highlighted the importance of young refugee women and girls' participation, which is often made more difficult due to language barriers, cultural taboos and norms, and lack of access to policy and planning processes.



She made a call to action for young refugee women to shape solutions. At the GRF 2023, the Action Network, together with partners (BMZ, WPHF, New Women Connectors, and the Lotus Flower) made a joint pledge to advance displaced women's participation and leadership.

**Jean-Paul Kasika** from the Refugee-Led Organization Network of Kenya ([RELON-Kenya](#)) emphasized that inclusive engagement enables more effective outcomes and called for centering the voices of those with lived experience, especially from the Global South.

He emphasized that refugees must be equal partners in decision-making, with access to inclusive and culturally appropriate platforms to shape policy, programme implementation, and evaluation, and called for stronger partnerships with RLOs and accountability mechanisms to ensure impact.



## Third quarterly preparatory meeting on 16 September 2025

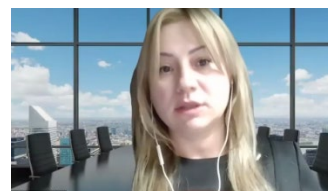
**Paul Kithima** from the [Bondeko Refugee Livelihoods Centre](#), a Uganda-based RLO, announced the organization's new role as co-lead of the Multi-stakeholder Pledge on [Advancing Localisation](#), enabling RLOs to directly contribute to global policy. He reported progress across the Pledge's focus areas of equitable partnerships, capacity-sharing, decision-making, and funding.



He updated on new strategies in Australia and Uganda, as well as engagement by IFRC, NGO training by BRAC, legal aid from PILnet, flexible financing pilots from HIAS and ICVA to strengthen RLO leadership, and growing inclusion of women-led groups and RLOs in policy fora.

**Yana Liubymova** from the organization led by internally displaced people, [Diieva Hromada](#), on behalf of the Advisory Board, stressed that 123 million forcibly displaced people are not just statistics, making a call for durable solutions. Displaced and stateless people must lead in policy design, monitoring and implementation and be resourced to do so.

Housing, land, and property rights are central to dignity, and durable solutions must be shaped with affected communities. RLOs need more direct, multi-year funding, and pledges must be tracked through inclusive, transparent and disaggregated data collected with displaced communities. (*Full statement [here](#)*).



**Muranga Kandanda** from Youth Initiative for Development ([YID](#)), as one of the co-leads and on behalf of [Multi-stakeholder Pledge](#) on Meaningful Refugee Participation, updated on the Pledge's 2025 workplan, which focused on embedding refugee participation in policy, strengthening advocacy, and tracking progress.

Highlights included activities of Uganda's Refugee Engagement Forum, new partnerships in Asia-Pacific where the UK is supporting five RLOs to access direct funding and capacity development, and RELON-Kenya technical working group's virtual training sessions helping equip stakeholders with tools for effective refugee engagement.

## Fourth quarterly preparatory meeting on 18 November 2025

**Kaumi Wakil** from [Grassroots Initiative for Strengthening Community Resilience \(GISCOR\)](#) on behalf of the Advisory Board, highlighted three priorities for advancing inclusive and sustainable humanitarian action: (i) Safe, voluntary, and dignified return, urging governments, UNHCR, and partners to restore essential services, support social cohesion and livelihoods, and ensure displaced people are involved in shaping return strategies; (ii) meaningful participation and localization, calling for the removal of barriers faced by refugee- and stateless-led organizations,



alongside sustained funding, technical support, and genuine decision-making roles throughout planning and implementation; (iii) addressing data fragmentation by promoting an inclusive and interoperable data ecosystem and a unified reporting framework to improve transparency and accountability. (*Full statement [here](#)*).

# Mainstreaming activities with the Multi-stakeholder Pledge on Meaningful Refugee Participation

A key priority of the [Meaningful Refugee Participation Multi-stakeholder Pledge](#) co-leads in 2025 was to promote mainstreaming of meaningful participation across the wider multi-stakeholder pledge framework. To this end, the co-leads – Asia Pacific Network of Refugees (APNOR), New Women Connectors (NWC), Youth Initiative for Development, Oxfam International, and Independent Diplomat – carried out several mainstreaming activities in collaboration with UNHCR. These included briefing UNHCR’s multi-stakeholder pledge focal point network, facilitating one-on-one sessions with pledge focal points to provide tailored support, and capacity-building for allies.

Three sessions equipped 75 representatives of meaningful participation supporters, including governments, international organizations, donors, and civil society organizations with conceptual and practical tools to embed meaningful participation in all stages of pledge development, implementation, stocktaking, and review. They strengthened stakeholders’ capacity to operationalize meaningful participation within their GRF Progress Review preparatory activities.

## Training and learning opportunities

UNHCR collaborated with the international RLO Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table ([R-SEAT](#)) and the Department of International Refugee Law and Migration Law of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law ([Sanremo Institute](#)) in a dedicated training programme for forcibly displaced and stateless people participating in the GRF Progress Review 2025. The training was open to all invitees with lived experience and ran from 23 October to 27 November 2025 with six parallel groups in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic. A total of 152 participants underwent the training, of whom over 130 completed it.

The training was designed to specifically support Progress Review participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness with the necessary knowledge and skills to make the most of their participation in this global policy gathering. The training syllabus included sessions on the global refugee regime, its main actors and roles, meaningful participation as a strategic priority, and advocacy techniques. The evaluation survey revealed that the training sessions helped advocates feel more prepared to engage meaningfully in technical and policy discussions at the GRF Progress Review.

Additional training opportunities on strengthening coordination among participants, and preparing advocacy strategies and key messages to effectively engage in the GCR ecosystem were organized by NGOs, RLOs, and UNHCR.



International Institute of Humanitarian Law  
Institut International de Droit Humanitaire  
Istituto Internazionale di Diritto Umanitario



# Contributions from the Advisory Board of Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons

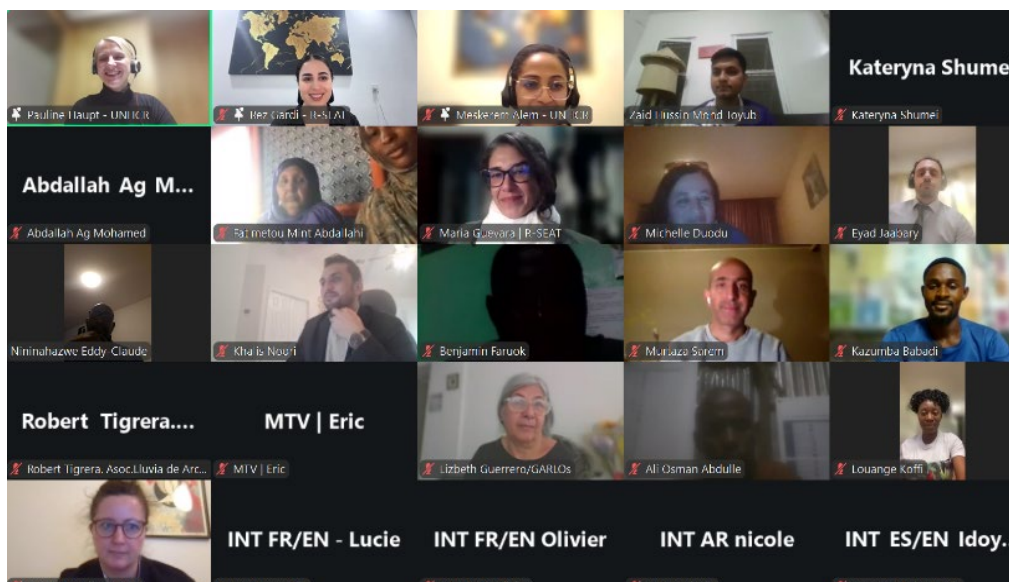
Beyond the Advisory Board's interventions at all four preparatory meetings on the GRF Progress Review 2025 and co-facilitation of several online sessions such as the RLO consultations on the programme, UNHCR engaged with three working groups from the Advisory Board members during the six months prior to the Progress Review 2025. This engagement was designed to (i) lead the drafting process of the Global Refugee Statement; (ii) design the orientation meeting for forcibly displaced and stateless GRF Progress Review participants; and (iii) design a session with the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the closing plenary.

## Drafting process of the Global Refugee Statement

The Advisory Board Working Group for the Global Refugee Statement ensured that this intervention, presented in the opening plenary of the Progress Review, was inclusive and amplified the priorities of forcibly displaced and stateless people and their organizations around the globe. To this end, the Working Group, with support from UNHCR, administered a survey in October 2025 and convened two online discussions in November with forcibly displaced and stateless people to identify key thematic priorities and recommendations that should feature in the statement.

The statement benefitted from the input of 96 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people whose rich discussion results were analyzed and consolidated into a set of messages. The final version of the statement was circulated widely to people with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness and the organizations they represent for endorsement before the event.

108 organizations, including those led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, [endorsed](#) or aligned with the statement. The Advisory Board selected a member of the Board to deliver the statement on behalf of the wider forcibly displaced and stateless community during the event itself. Read the final statement in [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#), and [Arabic](#).



## Co-design of Orientation Day

The Advisory Board Working Group for the design of the orientation day prepared and facilitated with UNHCR this session for refugee participants to meet each other, interact with UNHCR senior management and prepare for the Progress Review. Through a series of regular planning meetings with the co-organizers, they designed the agenda, identified priority topics and structured sessions to ensure relevance, practicality and alignment with the event objectives.



The orientation meeting brought together approximately 160 forcibly displaced and stateless GRF Progress Review participants, reflecting broad geographic and organizational diversity. It combined information-sharing, skills development, and open exchange with senior UNHCR leadership. The orientation included a dedicated session on the GRF Progress Review agenda, event modalities and logistical arrangements to ensure participants were fully prepared to engage in the event.



Two interactive, peer-led training sessions were organized, one by [APNOR](#) which focused on partnership building and fundraising strategies, and the other by [Refugee Congress](#), [US Refugee Advisory Board](#), and [Refugee Council USA](#), focused on effective diplomacy in networking. These training sessions included scenario-based group exercises simulating GRF contexts, such as floor interventions, engaging with government representatives, and participating in high-level networking meetings.



Participants practiced short interventions and pitches, received peer feedback, and reflected on effective follow-up strategies. The programme also featured a meet-and-greet with former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi and other UNHCR leadership, on topics selected in advance by participants such as the humanitarian funding crisis and its deep impact on refugee-led organizations, safeguarding international protection norms, strengthening meaningful refugee participation in restrictive environments, and the importance of durable solutions and self-reliance.



*“It was simply a space to give us more confidence, dispel any doubts anyone might have, explain everything about the GRF days, among other things that preparation entails.”*

– Refugee participant in the evaluation survey

The orientation meeting successfully equipped participants with practical tools and shared understanding, and strengthened networks ahead of the GRF Progress Review. According to the post-event survey completed by forcibly displaced and stateless participants, the average satisfaction rating for the meeting was 4.48 out of 5, indicating a high level of satisfaction. Moreover, 97 per cent of respondents reported that the orientation meeting made them feel more prepared and/or that it enhanced their participation in the GRF Progress Review. These results demonstrate that the orientation meeting is an important and concrete component of meaningful participation, enabling peer exchange, strategizing in a collective manner, and providing mutual support.



Former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, welcomes the refugee delegation at the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review 2025. © UNHCR/Anne-Laure Lechat

## Co-design process of plenary discussion with former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi

The Advisory Board Working Group for the co-design of a plenary discussion between refugee leaders and former UN High Commissioner Filippo Grandi developed a vision, concept note, and speaker list for the dedicated high-level session over an extended process. The Working Group proposed an informal dialogue format to ensure an authentic exchange about progress made to date in implementing meaningful participation as well as challenges that lie ahead. The angle chosen by the Working Group was to provide examples from global, regional, to local levels, represented through refugee leaders in their respective native languages and the former UN High Commissioner reflecting on his 10-year tenure with UNHCR and looking at the way ahead.

## II. During the GRF Progress Review 2025

In terms of numbers, 260 participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness participated in-person in the GRF Progress Review 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland, from 15 to 17 December 2025. Out of the total number of 1,486 in-person participants at the Progress Review, 17.5 per cent had lived experience, the highest percentage<sup>4</sup> ever recorded in GCR events. The 260 participants included 153 representatives of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people (109 representatives of 60 refugee-led organizations (RLOs), 8 representatives of 8 organizations led by internally displaced people, and 9 representatives of 6 organizations led by stateless people), 25 representatives of non-governmental organizations, and over 65 individual experts, of whom at least 34 also represent RLOs.

The 260 participants also included seven refugee advisors of government delegations, and additional participants with lived experience came as part of delegations of private sector, UN, International Organizations, city, sports, and academic entities. Compared to the GRF 2023, a greater number of networks of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people were present at the Progress Review. This may reflect the growing number of networks led by refugees, internally displaced, and stateless people and their increased engagement and inclusion in global policy spaces. These networks play an important convening role, representing organizations that address thematic or regional issues, which helps ensure broader engagement across the priorities of the GCR.

**Funding:** Thanks to financial contributions from Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, UNHCR sponsored 127 forcibly displaced and stateless people, their organizations and local actors to participate in the preparations, event and follow up, and 119 traveled to Geneva to join the proceedings in person. Beyond the UNHCR-funded participants, some 60 delegates with lived experience were funded by NGOs and RLOs, and the remaining participants were either self-funded or funded through their inviting organization (e.g. governments, private sector entities, UN agencies, etc.). UNHCR coordinated with partners to ensure as many RLOs would be able to attend with at least one delegate as possible.

**Registrants vs. in-person participants:** While 260 participants joined the Progress Review in person (badges were scanned at the entrance), there were 330 event registrants with lived experience, indicating that 70 registered but did not attend, due to reasons including visa and travel document constraints, personal, or other reasons. Increased efforts were made between UNHCR's GCR Section and the Swiss Permanent Mission's Visa Section to ensure smooth visa processing for invited participants with lived experience.

**Plenary seating arrangements:** In the GRF Progress Review 2025 plenary, the largest two categories of seats were States and forcibly displaced and stateless people: 124 seats were dedicated to forcibly displaced and stateless people, representing around 17 per cent out of all 740 seats. In comparison, 26 per cent of the plenary seats were assumed by States. The 125 seats included the 17 Advisory Board organizations, 70 individual forcibly displaced and stateless leaders, and 36 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people. Delegates with lived experience who came as part of other delegations were spread across the plenary space.

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<sup>4</sup> For reference, the first GRF in 2019 saw some [70 refugee participants](#), amounting to less than 3 per cent of all 3,000 participants; the first GRF Progress Review in 2021 (fully hybrid event) saw [77 refugee participants](#), amounting to 4.3 per cent of [1,800 participants](#); and the [GRF in 2023](#) included 328 forcibly displaced and stateless participants, representing 8 per cent of the 4,200 total registered participants.

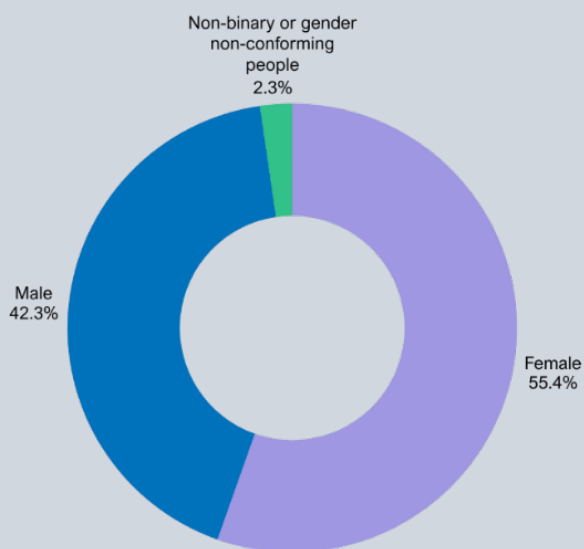
# Age, gender, diversity, and regional representation of participants

## Gender representation

144 Women<sup>5</sup>      110 Men  
 55.4%              42.3%

6 Non-binary / Gender non-conforming  
 2.3%

*Women made up just over half of participants, while non-binary and gender non-conforming representation remained very limited.*

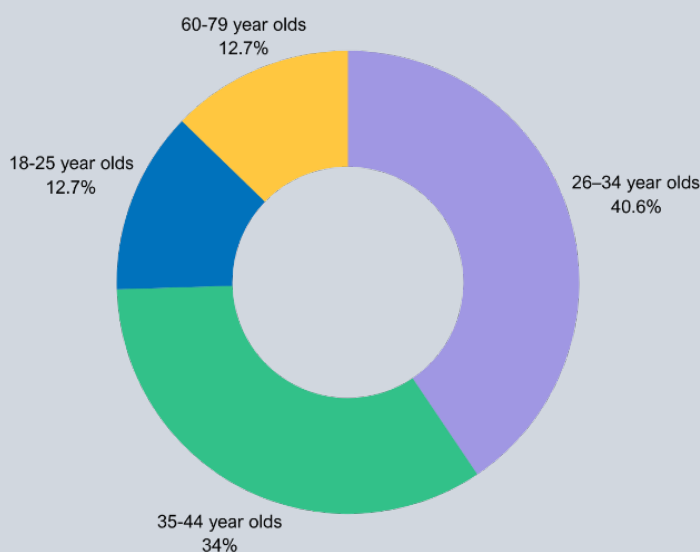


## Age profiles

18–25 years      26–34 years  
 12 participants      99 participants

35–44 years      45–59 years  
 83 participants      53 participants

60–79 years      *Over 70% of participants were aged 26–44, showing a strong concentration in early-to-mid adulthood.*  
 12 participants



## Why this matters

While UNHCR is directly accountable for the Age, Gender and Diversity of the 127 participants it selected for funding, the overall participation profile highlights a shared responsibility. All stakeholders involved in the GCR process should further strengthen efforts to ensure more inclusive age representation, particularly of adolescents, youth, and older persons across future engagement and consultation spaces.

<sup>5</sup> Out of the 144 female participants, 94 participated as part of NGOs and RLO delegations, 34 as individual expert leaders, 2 as municipal representatives, 2 as part of the private sector, 2 as part of other UN entities, 4 as part of IGOs, and 6 as part of government delegations (of which 2 were dedicated refugee advisors). Among the 6 non-binary or gender non-conforming participants, 4 participated as part of NGOs and RLO delegations, and 2 as individual expert leaders. Out of the 110 male participants, 57 came as part of NGOs and RLO delegations, 31 as individual expert leaders, 1 as part of the private sector, 1 as part of other UN entities, 2 as part of academia, 1 as part of IGOs, and 17 as part of government delegations (of which 5 were dedicated refugee advisors).

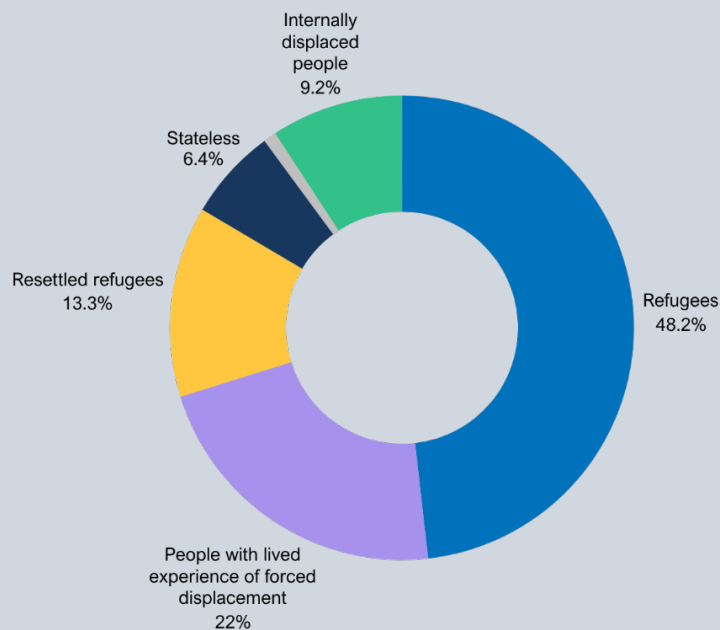
## Types of lived experiences

218 of the 260 participants with lived experience opted to disclose information on the type of their lived experience.

Nearly half of the 218 participants identify primarily as refugees, followed by other forced displacement categories.

Statelessness is represented but comparatively smaller, and returnees are marginally represented. As some 16 per cent did not disclose, actual diversity may be slightly broader than reported.

*NB: This data is only indicative as lived experiences are complex and often involve several of those categories. 218 out of 260 participants disclosed what type of lived experience they identify the most with.*



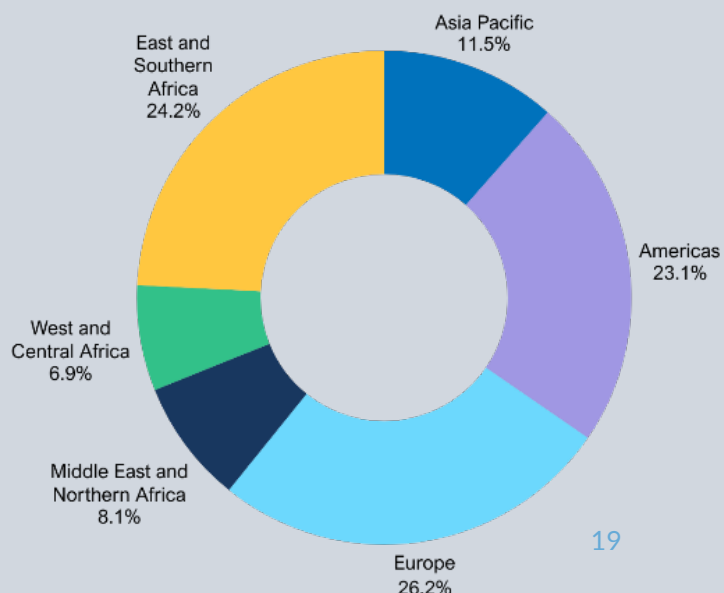
## Regions of origin of people with lived experience

Country of origin or original residence information was disclosed by 86 per cent of participants with lived experience of displacement and statelessness. Of the 224 participants for whom this information is available, the highest-represented regions of origin are West and Central Africa, followed by East and Southern Africa, and Middle East and Northern Africa.



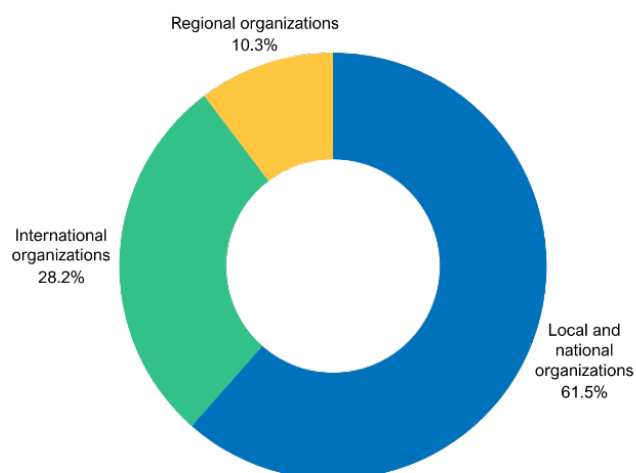
## Regions of residence of people with lived experience

Region of residence information was disclosed by all 260 participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness. While three major hosting regions across Global South and North are similarly highly represented with no single region dominating significantly, some hosting regions, particularly MENA and West and Central Africa, are underrepresented despite including major host countries.



## Scope of NGO- and RLO-affiliated participants

Out of 213 organization-affiliated (NGOs and RLOs) participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness, 131 represented local and national organizations, 22 represented regional organizations, and 60 represented international organizations. In light of UNHCR's Localization Policy and the GRF [Multi-stakeholder Pledge on Localization](#), it is a highly positive finding that more than 60 per cent of participating organizations represent local and national actors. UNHCR will continue to strive to promote strengthened levels of regional actor participation moving forward.



## Disability inclusion

The participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness included nine people with disabilities, eight of whom were sponsored by UNHCR. Moreover, where needed, UNHCR provided sponsorship for participants with disabilities to bring a companion to support them and ensure equal and meaningful participation. The nine leaders with disabilities included representatives of three organizations led by refugees with disabilities.

During the GRF Progress Review, the [Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities \(GNRD\)](#) was launched with the aim to unite organizations led by refugees with disabilities to engage in advocacy opportunities for disability rights and inclusion at global, regional and local levels and to secure financial support for their work. The GNRD counts 11 member organizations in Europe, Eastern and Southern Africa, the Americas, and West and Central Africa and its Chairperson, Julius Ntobuah, presented the Network's pledge in the Progress Review plenary and discussed its work during the side event on meaningful refugee participation.



*"GNRD pledges to build a global platform that will serve as a vehicle for the meaningful participation of refugees with disabilities bringing together disabled refugee-led organizations from all corners of the world and providing them with opportunities to engage in national, regional, and global forums."*

– Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities (GNRD)



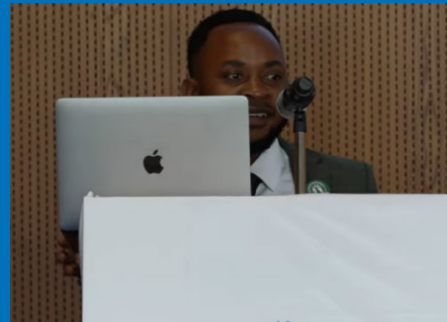
GNRD pledge on Disability Inclusion at the GRF Progress Review © Marco Gonçalves Dias

Muombamungu James, Executive Director of one of the Network's member organizations, [Association of Refugees with Disability \(ARD\)](#) in Uganda, delivered a thought-provoking presentation at the Progress Review's Speakers' Corner, *Advancing Inclusive Refugee Responses for Refugees with Disabilities*, highlighting the urgent need for stronger inclusion of refugees with disabilities in humanitarian responses (video available [here](#)).



*“As we review global progress today, let us ensure that refugees with disabilities are not left behind – not in assistance, not in opportunity, not in crisis, and not in the future we are building together.”*

– Muombamungu James, ARD



Muombamungu James presenting at the Speakers' Corner at the GRF Progress Review © UNHCR

## LGBTIQ+ advocacy

At least 13 participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness were representatives of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless LGBTIQ+ people, including the Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN) in Australia, Healing on the Move in Belgium, Casa Frida Refugio LGBTIQ A.C. in Mexico, Arc Essentiel in France, Asociación Civil Lluvia de Arcoíris in Ecuador, Comité LGBTIQ del Valle de Sula in Honduras, and the Institute Sobre Migración y Refugio LGBTIQ para Centroamérica (IRCA CASABIERTA) in Costa Rica. The participation of four of these organizations was sponsored by UNHCR.

LGBTIQ+-led organizations present at the Progress Review advocated the rights and protection of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced and stateless people. For example, in its plenary statement, the Forcibly Displaced People Network called on all stakeholders to remove protection barriers for LGBTIQ+ refugees, increase resettlement and complementary pathways for them and funding for organizations they lead, and ensure that GRF pledges embed these principles and recommendations.



*“During plenary, I had the honor of delivering FDPN’s official statement. Standing in this space was deeply meaningful, this representation matters. My participation was not abstract; I spent 7 years in [asylum] and transit countries without dignity. Being able to speak in Geneva carries privilege and responsibility for me. While I’m safe now, many are not, and this creates a strong sense of responsibility for me to ensure this participation is not only symbolic but effective.”*

– Saina Avesta, FDPN



Saina Avesta delivers the Forcibly Displaced People Network’s (FDPN) plenary statement © Saina Avesta

## Speaking engagements across plenary and ecosystem

Across all different types of speaking categories at the official event venue (plenary pledge announcements and spotlight sessions, side events and Speakers' Corner), 71 participants with lived experience were formal speakers, amounting to 23 per cent of speakers across all categories, compared to speakers from Governments (38 per cent), Civil Society excluding lived experience (10 per cent) International Organizations (22 per cent), Development Actors (14 per cent), and Private Sector (9 per cent).

### Lived experience representation in speaking roles

- ▶ Plenary podium: **14** speakers, **29%** of all speakers
- ▶ Side events: **46** speakers, **19%** of all speakers
- ▶ Side events featuring speakers with lived experience: **27** events, **100%** of events
- ▶ Speakers' Corner: **11**, **100%** of speakers
- ▶ All categories combined: **71** speakers, **23%** of total speakers

Lived experience and government speakers in plenary were on par

29 per cent (14) of all plenary opening, closing and pledge announcement speakers were people with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness, putting them on par with government speakers, followed by private sector (24 per cent), civil society (18 per cent) excluding lived experience speakers, International Organizations (10 per cent), and Development Actors (4 per cent).

### Opening plenary session

The GRF Progress Review was opened by former High Commissioner Grandi and Refugee Paralympic Medalist Zakia Khudadadi, who shared her journey from growing up as a woman with a disability in Afghanistan to becoming a champion athlete and French citizen. She highlighted the transformative power of sport and education in building resilience, dignity and hope, and called on the international community to continue supporting Afghan women and girls, especially their right to education and participation in sport. She concluded with a message of hope, encouraging refugees everywhere to remain resilient and pursue their dreams:



Former refugee athlete, Zakia Khudadadi, delivering her remarks at the opening ceremony of the GRF Progress Review 2025 © UNHCR /Pierre Albouy

*“My dream is that one day all women will be able to run freely, not to flee fear, but to achieve their dreams.”*

During the opening plenary of the GRF Progress Review, Nour Jarrouj, representing the [Moving Minds Alliance](#) and the Advisory Board, delivered the Global Refugee Statement, [endorsed by 59 organizations](#) led by forcibly displaced and stateless people and supported by an additional 49 civil society organizations (108 in total). In their statement, forcibly displaced and stateless people called for stronger global action amid record displacement and shrinking humanitarian support. They emphasized that refugees are leaders and partners, not passive recipients of humanitarian aid, and urged stakeholders to enable meaningful participation, proper funding for their organizations, and inclusive policies that address the diverse needs of women, youth, LGBTIQ+ people, and people with disabilities. The statement stressed the need for renewed commitment to durable solutions and a firm defence of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the right to seek asylum. Read the final statement in [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#), and [Arabic](#).



*“Refugees across generations, genders, and identities are leading responses within their communities, but their leadership remains under-recognized and underfunded. Consultation without decision-making power is not meaningful participation. Tokenism wastes expertise. Excluding refugees from policy design undermines the effectiveness of the entire system. Localization efforts must shift power rather than responsibility, prioritizing quality funding for organizations led by displaced and stateless persons, and ensuring international organizations complement rather than overshadow this leadership. If we want better and more effective outcomes, refugees must be partners, not afterthoughts.”*

– Excerpt from the Global Refugee Statement



UNHCR Advisory Board Member and Syrian refugee, Ms. Nour Jarrouj, giving the Global Refugee Statement at the GRF Progress Review, 2025. © UNHCR/Anne-Laure Lechat

## Pledge announcements in plenary

In plenary, 7 out of 26 pledge announcements (27 per cent) were delivered by participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness, many as partners or leaders. For example, the [Refugee Advisory Group](#) to the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP) presented the Group’s new 2025-2028 pledge on Strengthening and Advancing Refugee Led Expertise in Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, which includes concrete commitments to input on key policy documents, advocate with governments and other partners to expand global responsibility sharing, institutionalize meaningful refugee participation across the CRCP system, and ground all advice in community consultation.



Daniel Gamboa, New Zealand National Refugee Youth Council, and Sara Kuwatly, World University Service of Canada, announce a pledge on behalf of the Refugee Advisory Group on CRCP. © UNHCR/Pierre Albouy



Gerald Mballe, coordinator of Unified with Refugees, on behalf of Special Olympics International, announces new pledges at the GRF Progress Review 2025. © UNHCR/Anne-Laure Lechat



Suzanne Husseini announces a pledge on behalf of Welcome Japan at the GRF Progress Review 2025. © UNHCR/Pierre Albouy



Valeriya Vershynina, forcibly displaced leader from Ukraine, announces a pledge on behalf of Slovenia at the Progress Review. © UNHCR/Pierre Albouy

## Side events

For the first time ever, all side events and spotlight sessions in the event included at least one or several high-level panelists with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness. They included 46 speakers with lived experience (28 women and 18 men) who shared their thematic expertise and contributions across 27 side events, strategic dialogues and spotlight sessions.

Speakers with lived experience featured in 100 per cent of spotlight sessions and side events

These speakers made up 19 per cent of the entire speaker lineup of 278 side event and spotlight session speakers. Moreover, in line with UNHCR's localization agenda, 100 per cent of side events had local civil society organizations (CSOs), State or inter-governmental representatives from the Global South as speakers.

The average percentage of speakers that represent local and national CSOs or State or inter-governmental representatives from the Global South was 36 per cent, marking a significant improvement from previous events. Across all sessions, a consistent message emerged: forcibly displaced and stateless people are active contributors, decision-makers and co-creators of solutions, and their inclusion strengthens economies, institutions and social cohesion. The speakers called for moving beyond consultation towards institutionalized co-leadership, backed by legal recognition, predictable multi-year financing, inclusive policies and accountable pledge implementation, to ensure the GCR translates into durable impact at the GRF 2027 and beyond. This applies to areas ranging from resettlement and labour mobility to education, gender equality, digital protection, localization and safe return.

### For example:

- ▶ In the side event on Advancing Gender Equality and Ending Violence against Refugee Women and Girls, Cecile Losamandjo Pango, of [Women for Action](#), shared how funding cuts are undermining refugee women-led initiatives in Malawi and other contexts, while sustained support is essential for protection and leadership of women and girls facing violence and exclusion: *"Women-led organizations are not optional actors. They are frontline responders."*
- ▶ In the side event on Accelerating the HDP Nexus Approaches in Forced Displacement Settings, Foni Joyce from the [Global Refugee Youth Network \(GRYN\)](#) stressed that, while the HDP Nexus is widely discussed and *"there has been a shift that has acknowledged that refugees are not just beneficiaries, but long-term actors within their communities and societies"*, RLOs are too often treated as implementing partners rather than strategic decision-makers: *"RLOs are trusted enough to deliver but not trusted enough to decide."*

- ▶ In the side event on Leveraging Insights from the GCR Indicator Report and the Role of Data and Statistical Systems, Noor Azizah from the [Rohingya Maiyafuñor Collaborative Network \(RMCN\)](#) noted that statistical inclusion ensures refugees are recognized as active contributors to national development, and that data should guide action rather than merely describe crisis: *“When refugees are counted, they count. [...] Statistics should do more than describe crisis – they should guide action.”*
- ▶ In the Human Settlements as Foundations for Inclusive and Resilient Futures event, Grace Dorong from [Root of Generations \(RoG\)](#) called for transforming Kakuma Refugee Camp from a temporary settlement into a permanent, integrated home by implementing inclusive policies such as property rights, clearing registration backlogs, and enabling equal access to employment, education, and services. *“Make Kakuma a home, not a temporary camp. Refugees are not people to be enclosed. They can contribute 100 per cent to the economy.”*
- ▶ In the event on Syria: Reshaping the Narrative of Syrian Refugees, Addressing Root Causes, and Fostering Durable Solutions, Mustafa Alio from [R-SEAT](#) stressed the importance of voluntary, dignified, and conditions-based return to Syria, backed by serious investment in housing, livelihoods, documentation, and protection to ensure sustainable reconstruction. Read the summary of the interventions from panelists with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness in the Annex.



*“When people say that refugees are a burden, what I hear is we didn’t build the policies to allow refugee people to contribute. Refugees are not a cost centre. They are a skilled pool and community asset when countries choose inclusion versus exclusion.”*

– Mustafa Alio, Co-Managing Director, R-SEAT



Mustafa Alio, Co-Managing Director, R-SEAT at the Syria side event. © UNHCR/Anne-Laure Lechat

## Side event on meaningful refugee participation

The Meaningful Refugee Participation in Practice: Scaling Impact and Shaping the Path Forward side event was organized with the co-leads of [the Multi-stakeholder Pledge on Meaningful Refugee Participation](#) – Youth Initiative for Development, Asia Pacific Network of Refugees, New Women Connectors, Oxfam International, and Independent Diplomat. The event reaffirmed that meaningful participation is not an option, but both a right and strategic necessity.

The first panel discussion, which focused on examples of progress and impact generated through meaningful participation, showcased:

- ▶ The advancements steered by the Governments of Mexico represented by Xadeni Méndez Márquez, Coordinadora General, Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR), and of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland represented by Olaf Henrickson-Bell, Director Migration, FCDO;

- ▶ Regional examples from the Latin American and Caribbean RLO-network GARLOS of the implementation of the Chile Plan of Action 2024-2043, represented by Gisela Esperanza Serrano Barco, Vice President, Fundación Mahuampi Venezuela, and from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), represented by Ambassador Moussa Ali Meigague, Director of Health and Social Development; and
- ▶ Good practices shared by refugee-led organizations New Women Connectors, represented by Managing Director, Anila Noor, and Afghanistan Hazaras Culture and Solidarity Association (AHCSA), with Dr. Murtaza Sarem, Capacity Development Officer and Head of Migration Research Committee.

The second panel examined remaining gaps and recommendations on the way forward, including:

- ▶ The role of foundations, represented by Dina Randrianasolo, Director, Strategic Partnerships & Innovation, Mastercard Foundation;
- ▶ Contributions from cities and local authorities represented by Dr. Sanya Kirk Wilson, Mayor of Koboko Municipality, Uganda; and
- ▶ Refugee-led networks and organizations represented by Muranga Kandanda, Managing Director, Youth Initiative for Development (YID), Liliane Mukidi, Director, Umoja Skills Development and member of the African Women’s Refugee-Led Network (AWRNET), and Najeeba Wazefadost, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Network of Refugees (APNOR).

The event also featured statements of support reinforcing broad-based commitments to advancing meaningful participation, from:

- Victor Corso Semple, Director of Migrations, Ministry of Justice, Government of Brazil
- Joseph Youhana, Refugee Advisor to the Australian Government delegation
- Valeriia Vershynina, Executive Director, from the internally displaced person (IDP)-led network, Stabilization Support Services, Ukraine
- Paulo Méndez Alvarado, Central Autónoma de Trabajadores del Perú (CAT Perú) within the ILO delegation
- Julius Mvenyi Ntobuah, Chair of the Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities (GNRD)

The discussion concluded with a keynote speech by the Government of Switzerland, represented by Ambassador Patrizia Danzi, Director-General, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and Emirhan Darcan, Refugee Representative, Swiss Government delegation and Board Member of AsyLex. They emphasized that while progress on meaningful participation is evident, it must now be institutionalized, properly financed, and protected from tokenism.



Side event on meaningful refugee participation, held during the GRF Progress Review 2025 © UNHCR/Pierre Albouy

## Key findings from the side event discussion

- ✓ Since the GRF 2023, more States and regional bodies have integrated refugees and stateless people into formal structures. Examples include Mexico's institutionalized dialogue platforms; the IGAD Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) which provides a structured space for refugees to contribute directly to regional policymaking, advocacy, and planning for durable solutions; and local models such as the municipality of Koboko in Uganda, where refugees are formally represented in local governance structures.
- ✓ Regional and global refugee-led networks (e.g., GARLOS in Latin America and the Caribbean, AWRNET for refugee-women leaders in Africa, and the Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities) have strengthened advocacy, enabling refugees to influence policy processes such as Cartagena+40. In parallel, displacement-led mechanisms, including Ukraine's internally displaced person (IDP) councils, have demonstrated how affected communities can shape national recovery and reconstruction planning.
- ✓ Partnerships increasingly emphasize co-design and co-implementation rather than tokenistic consultation. Foundations and donors (e.g., Mastercard Foundation) are embedding refugee leadership in programming cycles and providing multi-year and institutional capacity support, resulting in more accountable and sustainable outcomes.
- ✓ While meaningful participation has gained strong normative recognition, institutional change has not kept pace. Progress remains uneven and highly context-dependent, often reliant on political will, individual champions, and short-term funding. Without systemic reforms, predictable financing, and enforceable frameworks, participation risks remaining episodic rather than transformative.

## Key recommendations from panelists

1. Institutionalize meaningful participation across all levels of governance and programming cycles
2. Provide multi-year, flexible funding to RLOs and RWLOs to strengthen organizational capacity
3. Advance legal frameworks to guarantee participation as a right
4. Protect meaningful participation from being sidelined by humanitarian funding pressures; embed co-design and co-implementation of pledges
5. Ensure gender and disability inclusion through targeted investment, mentorship, and accessible systems
6. Establish standards and safeguards to prevent tokenism and ensure influence

## The Speakers' Corner: A space 100 per cent dedicated to lived experience

The Speakers' Corner featured 100 per cent speakers with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness, with 11 speakers (6 women and 5 men) sharing their work and initiatives at the Corner over the three days of the event. The 11 speakers represented initiatives in East and Southern Africa (46 per cent of speakers), Asia and the Pacific, the Americas, and Europe (all 18 per cent). [Watch all Speakers' Corner sessions here.](#)

## Linked events: The R-Space

One of the key spaces for linked events outside the main venue was the [R-Space](#) at Geneva's Impact Hub, which featured 27 refugee-led panels open to all Progress Review participants as well as to the general public. R-Space describes itself as "a refugee-led forum for critical dialogue that shifts away from state-centric conversations toward solutions driven by impacted communities." Over the three days of the Progress Review, diverse stakeholders engaged in the R-Space and praised it as a forum for authentic dialogue in a more intimate atmosphere complementing the official venue and programme. R-Space also offered one-on-one support sessions for RLOs on engagement strategies, organizational growth, and legal resources (in partnership with AROPA Initiative for International Solidarity, Refugee Emergency Fund, PILnet, and Asia Pacific Network of Refugees). The space was hosted by [Coalición por Venezuela](#), [GARLOS](#), [Refugee Advisory Board Germany](#), [Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table](#), [Asylum Access](#), [Refugees International](#), [Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative](#), and [Young African Refugees for Integral Development](#), with financial support from Robert Bosch Foundation, Porticus, Hilton Foundation, and the IKEA Foundation.

## Plenary closing conversation with former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi

During the closing plenary of the GRF Progress Review, a conversation moderated by Monicah Malith of the [Tertiary Refugee Student Network \(TRSN\)](#) brought together former High Commissioner Grandi, Cecile Losamandjo Pango of [Women For Action](#), a refugee leader representing local advocacy and global-level pledges; Krista Rivas of [TRSN/ Grupo Articulador de RLOs de Latinoamérica y el Caribe \(GARLOS\)](#), a regional network; and Majdi Laktinah, a member of the [Refugee Advisory Board Germany](#), a government advisory mechanism. Together, they assessed progress on meaningful refugee participation, highlighting increased visibility and inclusion of refugees and stateless people in global processes, alongside concrete progress at regional and national levels. They cited strengthened women-led organizations and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) efforts in Malawi, expanded refugee youth and student networks influencing regional policy dialogue in Latin America, and the establishment of Germany's Refugee Advisory Board following the Government's pledge at the GRF 2023, enabling more substantive engagement in policy preparation and decision-making. Looking ahead to GRF 2027, panelists emphasized that participation must move beyond symbolic representation towards being "at the table" where decisions and resources are shaped, supported by institutionalized mechanisms, sustained financing, stronger representation, and greater investment in refugee- and women-led networks. The session concluded with personal pledges reinforcing continued advocacy, persistence despite constraints, and a focus on autonomy, self-reliance, and peace as central to durable solutions.

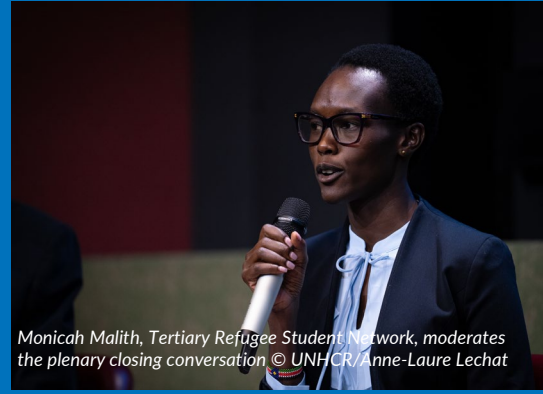


Former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi at the plenary closing conversation with refugee leaders © UNHCR/Pierre Albouy

*“Meaningful participation has to happen at all levels. Not just here, which is a great forum for discussion, for advocacy, for new ideas, so very important. It also needs to happen at all levels, all the way to where it matters most.”*

– Former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi

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Monicah Malith, Tertiary Refugee Student Network, moderates the plenary closing conversation © UNHCR/Anne-Laure Lechat

*“What I can personally do for the next two years leading to the Global Refugee Forum in 2027 is being an ambassador for peace because peace is the first solution to displacement.”*

– Monicah Malith, Tertiary Refugee Student Network

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*“I was here in 2023 at the occasion of the Global Refugee Forum, and that’s where I’ve realized that women do have rights. We can do something, we can act. [...] When I went back to my country, I brought back these demands, and I explained to women around me that we needed to negotiate. We needed to learn from people who knew how to do this, and we needed to train in this matter. We got trained so that we got ready to actually negotiate and this is how we obtained funding for 25 women-led organizations.”*

– Cecile Losamandjo Pango, Women for Action Network

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Cecile Losamandjo Pango shares insights from Malawi during the plenary closing conversation © UNHCR/Anne-Laure Lechat



Krista Rivas provides insights into regional participation advancements during the closing plenary conversation © UNHCR/Anne-Laure Lechat

*“What we need beyond participation is that participation is meaningful. It’s not just by inviting refugees to meetings, letting them speak for two hours, then let them go back home and then not allow them to be part of the process. It’s really about institutionalization, resources, and having that shared responsibility amongst all the actors. And that’s the reason why we’re putting out there that we need financing in our region, we have some of the countries with the highest number of refugees and we are facing the biggest financial cuts. And therefore, we do need that support that will allow us to monitor progress, to have statistics, to have data to be able to advance in our projects.”*

– Krista Rivas, TRSN and GARLOS

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*“I think one of the most important things that I would bring attention to is the institutionalization of the process. This is one of the most important things that would make meaningful refugee participation resilient to any political or funding changes. Otherwise, it’s always going to be affected by what’s going on and become optional. [...] And I invite everyone to invest in finding mechanism to make refugee participation institutionalized.” will allow us to monitor progress, to have statistics, to have data to be able to advance in our projects.”*

– Majdi Laktinah, Refugee Advisory Board Germany

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Majdi Laktinah shares insights from the context of the German Refugee Advisory Board during the closing plenary conversation © UNHCR/Anne-Laure Lechat

# Meaningful participation in the GCR pledge mechanism

## Pledges on meaningful participation

The [Multi-stakeholder Pledge on Meaningful Refugee Participation](#) brings together 102 pledges made by 37 pledging entities that include governments, UN entities, NGOs, RLOs, academia, private sector, faith-based organizations, and other stakeholders. In preparation for and during the GRF Progress Review 2025, 19 new pledges were added, including from RLOs, foundations, international NGO networks, and academia. To strengthen tracking of meaningful participation across implementation of all GCR pledges, UNHCR introduced a reporting question on meaningful participation in the pledge update form that pledge entities are asked to report on biannually. As of 1 March 2026, 940 pledge progress updates submitted by 510 pledging entities reported that forcibly displaced and stateless people and/or the organizations they lead had participated meaningfully in the implementation of their pledge.

Pledge entities can also opt to share more details on how such participation took place. While the quality and depth of reporting vary, numerous examples demonstrate high levels of participation in pledge implementation. These include the establishment of paid refugee advisory groups to support pledge strategy, advocacy and implementation; the co-drafting of collective statements; the design and roll-out of surveys; consultations with refugees during government project preparations; advocacy efforts contributing to policy and practice changes envisioned in pledges; and focus group discussions with governments that have led to the planned involvement of refugees in governance structures and the implementation of national strategies.

## RLOs as pledging entities

While the main objective of the Progress Review is to assess progress towards implementing the Global Compact on Refugees objectives and pledges, it also provides an opportunity for new members of the GCR community to engage and pledge, informed by changing realities on the ground. More organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people are engaging in pledging, with significant new pledges announced at the GRF Progress Review. For example, the regional RLO network Grupo Articulador de RLOs de Latinoamerica y el Caribe (GARLOS) in Latin America and the Caribbean – which comprises over 200 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people – launched a pledge on Forging Alliances in the Americas: Refugees as Agents of Change in Regional Mechanisms. GARLOS commits therein to support the implementation and monitoring of the Chile Plan of Action within the Cartagena +40 Process by creating a regional RLO-led monitoring system. Another key objective is to train at least 200 RLOs to be able to meaningfully participate in designing, implementing, and evaluating public policies.

### Other examples include:

- ▶ The [Refugee Advisory Group](#) to the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP) issued a pledge on Strengthening and Advancing Refugee Led Expertise in Resettlement and Complementary Pathways. Among other commitments, the Group pledges to strengthen and institutionalize meaningful refugee participation in global resettlement and complementary pathways systems from 2025 to 2028 by providing technical input into CRCP policy documents, annual projections, and advocacy around stronger, more predictable third-country solutions.

- ▶ The [Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities](#) (GNRD) launched a pledge on Advancing Disability Inclusion in Refugee Response. Being a new coalition of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people with disabilities, the GNRD pledges to “*build a global platform that will serve as a vehicle for the meaningful participation of refugees with disabilities, bringing together disabled refugee-led organizations from all corners of the world and providing them with opportunities to engage in national, regional, and global forums.*”
- ▶ The Ukrainian charitable organization “[Stabilization Support Services](#)” submitted a pledge on Embedding Internally Displaced Person (IDP) Councils in Recovery Processes, which commits to ensure that such Councils are actively involved in the planning, design, and implementation of recovery, development, and assistance projects in Ukraine. The pledge includes the launching of grant initiatives informed by Council input for community-led recovery, capacity-building for IDP Councils in project management, and monitoring and tracking of how Council recommendations influence outcomes.

## National-level participation highlights

Seven governments participating in the Progress Review included a refugee advisor in their official delegations: Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Throughout the event, these advisors contributed by participating in side events, jointly delivering government statements in plenary and other spaces, and engaging in multiple bilateral meetings. Australia, Canada, Germany and New Zealand selected their advisors through their established national refugee advisory mechanisms, ensuring strategic and sustained engagement ([Australian Refugee Advisory Panel](#), [Refugee Advisory Network of Canada](#), [Refugee Advisory Board Germany](#), and [New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel](#)).

As part of the German delegation, Majdi Laktinah spoke alongside former UN High Commissioner Grandi, highlighting the [establishment of Germany’s Refugee Advisory Board](#) (RAB) as a concrete outcome of Germany’s 2023 pledge and a model for institutionalized participation. Similarly, Joseph Youhana, Australia’s Refugee Advisor, emphasized during the side event on Meaningful Refugee Participation that it must be embedded in governance structures and supported by long-term, flexible funding. Emirhan Darcan, Refugee Advisor to the Swiss Government, jointly delivered a [statement](#) with Switzerland during the side event on Meaningful Refugee Participation, stressing the need to institutionalize participation through predictable financing and safeguards against tokenism.

During the side event on multi-year funding for education, the United Kingdom Refugee Advisor and research analyst from the European Institute of Peace, Hala Khankan, underscored that inclusion in education systems is essential for social cohesion with host communities, self-reliance and dignity.



*This wasn't just about being at the table; it was about having a voice in the room. I was proud to present parts of our National Statement, contribute to the resettlement intervention, and champion Meaningful Refugee Participation. Australia is setting a global precedent by ensuring lived experience isn't just an "add-on," but a core part of diplomatic strategy.*

– Joseph Youhana, Refugee Advisor to the Australian government delegation through the Australian Refugee Advisory Panel

In addition, [Australia](#), [Canada](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) co-delivered their government statements in plenary with their respective Refugee Advisors Joseph Youhana, Saifullah Muhammad, Hala Khankan. New Zealand's Refugee Advisor, Jane Smith, participated in a range of bilateral meetings as well as the discussion to launch the Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities (GNRD). Norway's Refugee Advisor, Bile Yahya Maalim, shared his reflections and contributions to the GRF Progress Review in an [interview](#).



*“What impressed me the most was seeing how the international community remains willing to support refugees, even in a very challenging global context. Despite multiple crises and limited resources, there is still strong commitment and solidarity. That was the most impactful part of the Forum for me.”*

– Bile Yahya Maalim, Refugee Advisor for the Norwegian delegation to the GRF Progress Review 2025, as a refugee with lived experience

During the closing plenary, former UN High Commissioner Filippo Grandi encouraged more refugee-hosting governments to establish national refugee advisory mechanisms, notwithstanding challenges. This builds on the GRF 2023, where host countries Brazil and Uganda attended with refugee government advisors, Uganda drawing from its national mechanism, the [Refugee Engagement Forum Uganda](#).

## How the Progress Review supported RLO goals

The post-event evaluation survey revealed that the GRF Progress Review enabled participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness to progress on or achieve their personal or organizational objectives, with nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) indicating that the event directly advanced or fulfilled their objectives, and over one third (36 per cent) saying that it somewhat advanced their objectives, reflecting some structural constraints (time, overlapping sessions, limited access to some spaces). No respondent selected “No”, meaning that every respondent reported at least partial progress towards their objectives – a strong indicator of impact.

The main objectives identified across respondents were networking and building partnerships, resource mobilization, increased international visibility and representation, more policy influence, and improved understanding of global refugee governance and advocacy.

### Examples worth noting

- ▶ The Ethiopian RLO Tomorrow is Better participated in the GRF Progress Review for the first time since its recent legal registration, representing an important opportunity to share perspectives from refugee-led actors in Ethiopia. During the event, representatives met with a range of stakeholders including States, NGOs, and philanthropic actors to exchange views on refugee inclusion and explore opportunities for collaboration. The meetings helped raise the visibility of RLOs in Ethiopia and strengthened connections with international partners.
- ▶ A representative working with internally displaced people (IDPs) in Ukraine sought to elevate the national IDP Council model, which enables displaced people's participation in local governance, to the global stage. Through interventions in a side event on cities and local governance and engagement in the R-Space, they secured visibility and recognition.

However, further support is needed to connect the model with actors in other contexts and secure funding for replication and scaling.

- ▶ A refugee advocate serving as a panelist on the Connected and Protected: Safeguarding Digital Protection in the AI Era side event ensured that lived experience shaped high-level discussions on protection and gender-based violence (GBV). By participating as a speaker and engaging directly with leaders and stakeholders, they were able to participate in dialogue and share policy-relevant insights. However, limited time and competing sessions restricted broader engagement, highlighting the need for more structured follow-up and continued refugee-led policy spaces.
- ▶ Following a multilateral meeting convened by Independent Diplomat during the Progress Review between three Ugandan RLOs – African Youth Action Network (AYAN), Similar Ground, and Refugee Women Led Network (REWON) – and the Koboko Municipality, Uganda, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Dr. Sanya Wilson, Mayor of Koboko, and the RLOs. The agreement grants them operational permits to work in the municipality’s urban areas, enables their participation in policy planning and implementation related to programming for urban refugees, and supports the delivery of peer learning and training for other RLOs and municipal technical officers on policy, diplomacy, advocacy, and engagement.

The post-event survey revealed that overall, participants representing organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people noted positively that the GRF Progress Review 2025 saw an increase in support provided to organizations compared to the GRF in 2023, when there was a perceived inequality between support provided to individual leaders without an organizational affiliation and those representatives coming on behalf of organizations.

Moreover, 91 per cent of returning participants considered their engagement to be more or equally meaningful, suggesting strong continuity and positive experience for those systematically engaged since 2023. 93 per cent of respondents wish to continue contributing to the implementation of the GCR and 99 per cent expressed interest in being invited to the GRF 2027.

### III. The follow-up process

Following the GRF Progress Review 2025, UNHCR and participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness undertook a joint evaluation to capture lessons learned and inform the path towards the GRF 2027. From January to February 2026, reflections were gathered in regional debrief sessions and an accompanying written evaluation survey, enabling participants to assess not only the scope of participation, but also its depth, quality, and impact.

The evaluations were well attended by 166 participants, who widely acknowledged the significant progress made since the GRF 2023, particularly the increased institutionalization of participation through advisory mechanisms, inclusion in State and multi-stakeholder delegations, and expanded access to the GCR process in general. Many highlighted that participation has become more visible and more consistent across the GRF cycle and that the channels for participation have diversified.



*“This year, what felt different to me was not only the presence of refugees in the room, but the way many of us arrived – connected through delegations, regions, and shared languages. For the first time in a while, I felt a sense of collective presence rather than isolated individuals navigating an overwhelming global space on their own.”*

– Laura Valencia, Global Refugee Youth Network

At the same time, feedback pointed to a persistent gap between participation and influence. While access has expanded, participants questioned whether existing structures consistently enable people with lived experience to shape priorities and decisions on equal footing with other actors. One participant questioned if meaningful participation as a norm might have expanded faster than the humanitarian system’s capacity to absorb refugee leadership in a meaningful way.



*“Participation is shifting – but institutional change has not yet kept pace with ambition.”*

– Muranga Kadanda, Youth Initiative for Development

Participants emphasized that moving from participation to influence requires clearer decision-making roles, predictable and flexible funding for organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, and accountability mechanisms that track how input from people with lived experience is reflected in outcomes.

## Priorities for 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, participants underscored the importance of continued participation and a stronger shift towards influence. Some of the core priorities for the year ahead included strengthened regional and national engagement platforms and RLO leadership therein; improved accountability and stocktaking mechanisms at regional and country levels; increased support to RLOs to engage meaningfully in the pledge framework; investment in data on the impact of participation; better alignment of broader global political and development agendas with the GCR; and stronger private sector engagement.

Having prioritized sustained engagement since the GRF 2023, UNHCR will continue to work with those organizations and forcibly displaced and stateless experts that remain actively involved in pledges and other GCR mechanisms, emphasizing the importance of long-term investment in participation. UNHCR will also continue working with forcibly displaced and stateless people to prepare GCR events and identify policy priorities to be featured. As all stakeholders continue to implement GRF pledges, forcibly displaced and stateless people and their organizations will maintain their involvement in pledge implementation at the regional and country levels, in particular looking ahead to the next Forum in 2027.

Key vehicles of participation in and advocacy for pledge implementation at the regional and country levels are existing and emerging refugee advisory or engagement mechanisms, such as the [IGAD Refugee Engagement Forum](#) for the two regional pledges on [Solutions](#) and [Climate Action](#) in Eastern Africa, and the [Grupo Articulador de las Organizaciones lideradas por personas Refugiadas y desplazadas en América Latina y el Caribe \(GARLOS\)](#) for the implementation of the [Chile Declaration and Plan of Action 2024-2034](#) and other regional frameworks. Similarly, the different forms of national refugee advisory mechanisms in nine countries are key platforms to enable participation in pledge implementation and showcase how collaboration with governments enhances outcomes.

At the global level, the multi-stakeholder pledge framework will remain a crucial platform to further advance meaningful participation by promoting (i) engagement and advisory mechanisms or enhancing the influence of existing ones; (ii) co-leadership of multi-stakeholder pledges; and (iii) RLOs as pledging entities in their own right. Capacity sharing activities such as RLO peer-to-peer learning sessions on how to engage meaningfully in the pledging cycle and joint guidance with RLOs on engagement in pledging are planned in 2026.

## A four-year cycle to sustain and consolidate meaningful participation

The planning for GRF 2027 begins now. Early and inclusive preparation will be essential to enable meaningful participation from the outset, including the identification and support of a new cohort of participants with lived experience, while maintaining institutional memory through continued engagement of leaders and organizations that have been engaging in the GCR thus far.

Participants advocated a balanced approach for GRF 2027 participant selection, reinviting active members of the GCR community while at the same time enabling new participants to join, ensuring continued access to the space for new individuals and organizations. UNHCR will work closely with 2025 participants and the incoming Advisory Board on the selection and engagement of participants.

At the same time, UNHCR is promoting a longer-term vision around meaningful participation, whereby global events such as the GRF and GRF Progress Review are milestones in multi-level policy processes spanning the entire four-year GRF cycle.

The objectives for the GRF 2027 would therefore fall into a four-year strategy, including support to existing and new participants, with an increased focus on regional and country level GCR implementation, RLO learning opportunities and peer-to-peer exchanges on pledging, based on participants' feedback. UNHCR will work with the current cohort of participants and others interested in developing a clear meaningful participation roadmap and four-year strategy to take this forward.

Finally, targeted efforts will be made to continue addressing persistent barriers to participation, such as language barriers, digital divides, visa restrictions, and unequal access to funding. Maintaining and consolidating this momentum of meaningful participation is critical. Investments in participation ahead of, during, and after the Progress Review 2025 have demonstrated clear returns: they enabled the inclusion of a record 17.5 per cent of participants with lived experience, strengthened the quality and legitimacy of discussions through their inclusion across all side events, and contributed to more inclusive pledging processes, with over half of multi-stakeholder pledges incorporating participation mechanisms and several co-led by RLOs. These efforts have also strengthened sustained participation, with over 90 per cent of participants expressing interest in remaining involved in follow-up processes and a majority planning to apply learning to advocacy and pledge implementation at regional and national levels.

Funding pressures and crisis-driven responses risk deprioritizing meaningful refugee participation, which is too often treated as an add-on rather than as a core component of effective and accountable humanitarian action. Such gains are resource-intensive and cannot be taken for granted; sustaining and expanding them will require predictable, long-term investment and continued support from donors and partners. Advancing towards GRF 2027 offers an opportunity to consolidate gains, address remaining gaps, and move decisively from participation to influence and shared leadership.

## Annex

### *Summary of interventions from panelists with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness in 27 side events*

Name of the event	Summary of interventions made by people with lived experience during the event
Impact and benefits of Resettlement: Perspectives from host and resettlement countries	Refugees contribute far beyond receiving support by paying taxes, starting businesses, filling labour gaps, and generating billions in economic value while enriching and strengthening host communities. Despite political and financial pressures, resettlement remains a vital lifeline that protects lives, supports host countries, and delivers long-term social and economic impact grounded in both evidence and lived experience.
Advancing Gender Equality and Ending Violence against Refugee Women and Girls	Funding cuts are undermining refugee women-led initiatives in Malawi and beyond. Sustained support, including safe spaces like sports activities, is essential for protection, empowerment, and leadership for women and girls facing violence and exclusion.
Rethinking Refugee Finance: Innovation in an Era of Mounting Pressures	Innovative finance should reinforce humanitarian assistance through sustainability and partnerships, and continued collaboration towards GRF 2027 is key to building dignified, resilient solutions for refugees and host communities.
Scaling Refugee Employment: Policy, Partnerships, and Labour Mobility	Investing in refugee self-reliance in host countries is essential to making labour mobility pathways effective and sustainable, as early investments in education and skills create the foundation for future employment opportunities. Embedding refugee expertise into programme design and ensuring training is directly linked to accessible job opportunities, particularly for women and youth, helps transform labour mobility from a standalone intervention into a scalable, long-term solution that advances dignity, stability, and measurable impact.
Accelerating HDP Nexus Approaches in Forced Displacement Settings	While the HDP is widely discussed, refugee-led organizations (RLOs) are still too often treated as implementing partners rather than strategic decision-makers, with persistent power imbalances limiting their meaningful inclusion. Drawing on examples from Uganda, the panelist called for RLOs to be genuinely trusted and engaged from the design phase onward, recognizing their proven impact in advancing inclusion, self-reliance, and community development as true partners rather than beneficiaries.
Delivering Better: How the GCR contributes to UN80 and the Humanitarian Reset through efficiency and collective impact for refugee inclusion – The UN Common Pledge 2.0	Building on two different contexts, the panelists showed how inclusive national policies enabled refugees to rebuild their lives with dignity, proving that inclusion is a political choice that strengthens both refugee and host communities.
Sustaining Momentum: Leveraging Insights from the GCR Indicator Report and the Role of Data and Statistical Systems	Statistical inclusion ensures that refugees are recognized as active contributors to national development, and data should guide action rather than merely describe crisis.
Safe pathways for Refugees: Unlocking international mobility for a sustainable future	The moderator framed the discussion around refugees' access to safe and legal migration pathways.

From Pledges to Progress: Cities Turning GCR Commitments into Local Impact	Drawing from his context, the panelist highlighted a significant gap between policy and practice, particularly in recognizing refugees as equal partners rather than beneficiaries. There is a need for deeper public participation, better access to documentation, and genuine co-design with refugee-led organizations to unlock refugees' economic contributions and ensure inclusion is embedded in local and national development planning.
GCR Mechanisms: Support Platforms	Displaced people must move from being seen as beneficiaries to becoming co-designers, decision-makers, and monitors of policies, with inclusive, well-funded, and data-informed participation that sustains solutions beyond political cycles and ensures that inclusion translates into concrete, life-changing action.
Bridging Gaps, Strengthening Systems, Fostering Well-being: Refugee Inclusion in National Health, Social Protection and Digital Identity Systems	Access to mental health and psychosocial support is not an optional add-on but the backbone of social protection and overall inclusion, especially in emergency settings. RLOs are trusted first responders and essential partners in bridging communities with national systems and to build more effective, sustainable responses.
Connected and Protected: Safeguarding Digital Protection in the AI era	In times of crisis, trusted information saves lives, and diaspora and refugee-led organizations play a vital role as credible digital responders who counter misinformation, translate urgent messages, and build trust within communities. They should be integrated into digital governance strategies, investing in digital literacy and monitoring tools, and ensuring technology serves as a space of protection, unity, and truth rather than division.
Route-based approach in action under the GCR	Drawing on her personal experience, the panelist advocated a rights-centred, route-based approach that includes safe and regular pathways, such as resettlement. This approach ensures that protection, dignity and opportunity accompany refugees throughout their journey, enabling them to not only survive, but also to rebuild their lives, contribute to society and feel a sense of belonging.
Human Settlements as Foundations for Inclusive and Resilient Futures	The panelist called for transforming Kakuma from a temporary camp into a permanent, integrated home by implementing inclusive policies such as granting property rights, clearing registration backlogs, and enabling equal access to employment, education, and services. This transformation should be co-design with refugees, integrated settlement with host communities, and recognition of refugees' skills and contributions. The panelist concluded by arguing that dignified inclusion and self-reliance are essential for reducing trauma, preventing conflict, and building resilient communities.
Implementation of the GCR in Latin America and the Caribbean	The panelist highlighted the progress made by RLOs in Latin America and the Caribbean through GARLOS in moving from symbolic participation to meaningful, decision-making influence within national and regional protection mechanisms such as MIRPS and the Cartagena +40 process. Sustained participation requires legal and economic stability, capacity strengthening, direct financing, and institutionalized inclusion. There should be continued investment and alliance-building so refugees can act as agents of change in shaping durable solutions.
Rohingya Multi Stakeholder Pledge Event	Rohingya refugees want durable solutions, including repatriation, but not at the expense of safety, dignity, and rights. The panelist stressed three essential pillars for a credible path forward: (i) ensuring legal recognition and rights in Myanmar, (ii) investing in protection and self-reliance now in host countries and meaningfully including Rohingya leadership and (iii) a comprehensive roadmap towards safe return.
Meaningful Refugee Participation in Practice: Scaling Impact and Shaping the Path Forward	The panelists called for meaningful refugee participation to move from symbolic consultation to a guaranteed, institutionalized right embedded in decision-making systems, grounded in legal clarity, predictable financing, and fundamental rights, and sustained beyond political cycles or funding shifts. They emphasized strengthening refugee-led networks, preventing tokenism, scaling co-leadership toward GRF 2027, and ensuring that refugees are systematically included as partners in governance, protection, and solutions.

Multi-Year Financing for Refugee Education: A Shared Responsibility to Secure Sustainable Futures	The panelist underscored that refugee education is a lifeline, sharing lived experiences of displacement, systemic barriers, and uncertainty to show that stable funding, recognition of qualifications, psychosocial support, and inclusion in policymaking are essential for dignity and self-reliance.
Turning Dialogue into Action: Lomé Dialogue sub -regional Strategy for Protection and Solutions	Panelist presented the Lomé Dialogue as a living symbol of African solidarity, calling on states to sustain political will and invest in protection, inclusion and resilience, ensuring initiatives translate into dignity, opportunity, and self-reliance for displaced families across the Gulf of Guinea.
Making Returns Sustainable and Supporting Reintegration in Today's World	The panelist called for returnees and refugee-led organizations to move from consultation to shared decision-making with formal authority, stressing that reintegration must combine economic recovery with land rights, documentation, justice, and sustained funding so displaced people can reclaim safety, dignity, and full citizenship now, not later.
Reshaping the Narrative of Syrian Refugees, Addressing Root Causes, and Fostering Durable Solutions	The panelist shared his lived experience of displacement and return to show that refugees, when given protection and access to work, are economic contributors, not burdens. He called for voluntary, dignified, and conditions-based return to Syria, backed by serious investment in housing, livelihoods, documentation, and protection to ensure sustainable reconstruction.
Legal identity for all: Addressing statelessness to achieve SDGs	Legal identity is a deeply political and personal form of protection; without nationality, true access to rights cannot exist. Statelessness should be treated as a central development priority under SDG 16.9. Inclusive civil registration, strong legal frameworks, safeguarded digital ID systems, and sustained collaboration are essential to turn commitments into real, lasting solutions that prevent exclusion and leave no one behind.
Sudan Regional Crisis: Scaling-up Development action and localization	Addressing Sudan's crisis requires understanding the political and social dynamics affecting the shift from humanitarian aid to long-term development, while building on the resilience and solidarity of Sudanese communities and diaspora efforts. The panelist called for stronger international advocacy, increased funding, and inclusive mechanisms to support balanced and sustainable development across Sudan.
Shaping the Future: Making Localization Work	Panelists from Uganda and Nigeria emphasized that true localization means trusting and directly funding refugee-led organizations as decision-makers. They stressed that RLOs generate jobs, services, and stronger systems when included early. Despite significant progress under the pledge, funding cuts and legal barriers threaten gains, making sustained commitment and institutionalized refugee leadership essential by GRF 2027.
GCR Mechanisms: Strengthening the Pledge Framework	The panelist emphasized that meaningful refugee participation must be structural and integrated from policy design through implementation and monitoring. She called for concrete mechanisms, adequate financing, and removal of administrative barriers to ensure refugees are recognized as legitimate partners and innovators in decision-making.
Strong and Sustainable Asylum Systems: Addressing Challenges, Enabling Protection and Solutions	The panelist highlighted how refugee representation in decision-making committees in Mexico enabled structural, root-cause solutions rather than case-by-case responses, demonstrating that genuine dialogue strengthens asylum systems. She described the UNHCR-refugee dialogue mechanisms in Mexico as an innovative model of co-responsibility and collaboration, showing that refugee participation is a fundamental pillar of a sustainable, humane, and effective asylum framework.
Driving Change: National Leadership for advancing Sustainable Responses	Through access to education and national systems, the panelist became a nurse and public health student, giving back to both refugee and host communities. Her experience demonstrates that when refugees are included from the start, they become skilled professionals, contributors, and active partners in national development rather than burdens.