

2023 UNHCR Regional Consultations with NGOs and civil society on “Solutions with a focus on Inclusion, and Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion” East and Horn and Great Lakes of Africa Concept Note

A. Background

UNHCR has a long-standing commitment to work with NGOs and other civil society organizations, recognizing their critical role in providing protection, assistance and finding solutions for refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

The first regional consultations with NGOs and civil society were held in 2021 followed by global NGO consultations in 2022. The second regional NGO consultations for the East and Horn and Great Lakes of Africa will take place from 13 June to 15 June 2023 and will inform the global consultations in 2024.

The main topics of the consultation will be “*Solutions with a focus on Inclusion (into national services) and Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion*”. The topics are based on the outcomes of a survey disseminated to civil society partners by UNHCR and ICVA in 2022.

The topics of “solutions and inclusion” and “livelihoods and economic inclusion” are in line with [UNHCR’s Strategic Directions 2022-2026](#), [the Global Compact on Refugees](#) and the purpose of [the second Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) to be held in December 2023. The outcomes of the consultations will inform strategic priority settings and organizational strategies of UNHCR, NGOs and other civil society actors in the region. The findings of the consultations will also be presented at the annual meeting of the UNHCR’s Executive Committee in October 2023 and inform and support the global NGO consultations to be held in Geneva in June 2024.

B. Topics

1. Solutions and Inclusion (in national systems)

UNHCR works with States, NGOs and civil society, and other stakeholders to identify and pursue solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless persons: advocating for conducive conditions for voluntary **repatriation**, **integration** in the host community, **resettlement**, and complementary pathways to third countries for refugees; and eradicating statelessness. NGO and civil society actors play a key role in these priorities through, for example: identification, case management, referrals and legal aid for resettlement; family reunification, and other sponsorship systems for complementary pathways; peace and reconciliation projects, housing land and property interventions, as well as financial and practical support for voluntary repatriation; and social, economic and legal interventions through education, livelihood and other service provision in support of local integration. Although new momentum and innovative approaches have emerged through processes such as the Global Compact on Refugees and the [UN Secretary-General Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#), solutions have not kept pace with the number of people being displaced and becoming stateless. In line with UNHCR’s Strategic Direction, it is fundamental to build on the multiplier effects of partnerships with NGOs and civil society to strive for progress, diversification, and innovation in the search for solutions out of displacement and statelessness.

To achieve durable solutions, the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations in national systems, programmes, and services is a key strategy to address their needs in a more predictable manner, promoting their self-reliance and resilience, while avoiding creating parallel systems. To this end, UNHCR particularly works with governments, civil society, and development actors in fostering opportunities to include displaced populations in national services.¹ This approach aims to ensure more cost-effective investments in national systems that will also benefit host communities through the expansion of quality services and investments in key sectors such as education, health, and social protection. NGOs and civil society partners support the approach through the development of projects that are aligned with the hosting country's inclusion plan, filling existing gaps without the creation of parallel systems, and facilitating the transfer of responsibilities to governmental structures. Interventions in this realm are varied and complement the work of governments in health, education, social security, services for people with special needs, etc. Partnerships between UNHCR and civil society actors are critical in project implementation, streamlining support to host governments and advocating for inclusion into national systems. UNHCR also believes that partnerships can identify and test new innovative practices to enhance inclusion for forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

2. Livelihoods & Resilience

Displaced populations and stateless people often face numerous challenges to contribute to existing market systems in hosting countries. As consequence of their displacement, refugees often lack capital (be it assets, financial social, natural etc) to participate meaningfully in gainful employment or initiate self-employment. In addition, they face numerous additional obstacles such as limited access to marketplaces, as many reside in remote camp locations, limited access to support services, high levels of pre-existing poverty in hosting communities with limited work opportunities and lack of access to fertile land and seeds.

In accordance with the [UNHCR Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Concept Note 2019-2023](#), UNHCR is mobilizing multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure the highest degree of economic inclusion of refugees into existing market systems. This requires shifting from traditional project approaches which focus on strengthening refugee vocational skills, to an approach that is putting the market [Guide to Market Based Interventions](#) and its needs at the centre as outlined in the joint UNHCR-ILO Market based approach.

UNHCR will continue advocating for legal and de-facto economic inclusion at state and regional level. This can only be achieved through strong partnerships with host governments, the private sector, NGOs, development actors, international agencies, and financial institutions.

INGOs, RLOs, Civil Society Organizations are central partners to develop and implement innovative projects that bring about new solutions to existing challenges for socio-economic inclusion. Being close to the affected populations INGOs, RLOs, Civil Society Organizations engage closely with displaced people and can ensure that their voices are being heard and projects designed to meet their articulated needs.

¹ [The 2022 HC Dialogue](#) on protection challenges structured conversations around three thematic pillars: early action, inclusion, and solutions, with protection as a central and cross-cutting objective throughout.

Side Events:

1. Gender equality

UNHCR's commitment to gender equality is articulated in the UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (2018) through five obligatory core actions. The [UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-26](#) identify accountability to women and children and gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and response as priority areas for additional, accelerated, and targeted action. UNHCR strives to ensure that women and girls participate equally and meaningfully in all decision-making, community management and leadership structures; are provided with individual registration and documentation; have equal access to and control over management and provision of food, core relief items, cash-based interventions; have equal access to economic, educational and health opportunities and have access to comprehensive GBV prevention and response services. UNHCR continues to strengthen engagement with displaced women-led organizations and strongly advocates for funding opportunities for these organizations through various mechanisms such as the [Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund](#). UNHCR also collaborates with the World Bank on the [Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement Research Program](#) and in early 2022, a [synthesis of this research](#) across 17 country studies was published to inform development policy and programming.

Over the years, UNHCR and partners have worked to prevent and respond to gender-related protection risks and needs for women, men, girls, and boys, while increasing the efforts to ensure that forcibly displaced and stateless persons are equally included in all steps of programming.

New and ongoing conflicts, the pushback on women's rights, the climate and environmental crisis, the economic and social fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated gender inequalities. The consultations will focus on challenges and opportunities that are most relevant to the regional context and will aim to ensure that gender equality is fully considered in all sessions, with specific recommendations aimed at strengthening meaningful participation, gender transformative approaches, addressing the gender data gap in humanitarian response, and strengthening evidence-based programming.

2. UNHCR programme reform and partnership

UNHCR continues to work on promoting and supporting better application of [the Principles of Partnership](#). The continued process of shared learning between NGOs and UNHCR is instrumental for efficiency and effectiveness in the work we do.

3. Climate displacement

C. Overall Objectives

Based on the above and grounded in [the Principles of Partnership](#), the 2023 Regional Consultations with NGOs and civil society will pursue the following objectives:

- Exchange and agree on regional UNHCR-NGOs and civil society strategic priorities for the topics discussed, taking into consideration the specific challenges and opportunities in each region.
- Develop regional-specific recommendations that promote solutions, inclusion and livelihoods, targeting UNHCR, NGOs or other stakeholders in the region.

- Develop regional-specific recommendations that on gender equality and other topics selected for side events, targeting UNHCR, NGOs or other stakeholders in the region.
- Identify regional-specific recommendations that will inform the global consultations in 2024 on the same topics.
- Mobilize and inform partners at regional level in view of the second Global Refugee Forum.

The preparation modalities, agenda, and participation will be developed in collaboration with ICVA and NGOs that have agreed to join the task teams.

Pre-consultation webinars

ICVA and the Regional Bureau for EHAGL are organizing pre-consultation webinars to inform the consultations.

1. GRF Briefing – 13 April 2023
2. Education and inclusion into national systems- 27 April 2023