

Localization and Climate Action

UNHCR Global Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
Geneva and online, 7-10 June 2022

Concept Note

A. PREAMBLE

Since 2019, the decentralization process undertaken by UNHCR has strengthened the presence of the Regional Bureaus in the respective geographic regions. This decentralization has provided opportunities for UNHCR to engage more directly with partners at the regional level. In light of this, UNHCR introduced regional consultations with NGOs to complement the long-running Global NGO Consultations, as a way of enriching these discussions within regional operational contexts.

The most recent [Global NGO Consultations](#), which took place virtually in September 2020, resulted in [key recommendations](#) that were presented at the [71st session of UNHCR's Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme \(ExCom\)](#). Among these recommendations was that global and regional consultations take place on alternating years and complement each other. As such, regional NGO consultations took place in all seven regions throughout the year of 2021 and consultations with NGOs will take place at global level, in Geneva and online (hybrid format) from 7 to 10 June 2022.

B. BACKGROUND

The theme for this Global Consultation will build on the [Regional Consultations with NGOs](#), which led to seven context-specific discussions around "Localization of humanitarian action and engagement with communities in the COVID-19 context". Given the launch of the UNHCR [Strategic Framework for Climate Action](#) in 2021, some of the regional consultations also tackled Climate Action and the three pillars covered by the framework: 1. Law and Policy, 2. Operations, and 3. Environmental Footprint. Those themes were also addressed through the [2021 Monthly online Consultations](#) organized by the UNHCR Partnership and Coordination Service (UNHCR PCS) NGO and Civil Society team and ICVA. The theme of the 2021 Regional Consultations with NGOs was selected following online surveys disseminated to partners by each Bureau.

1. Localization

UNHCR and NGOs among others, made the commitment at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016 to "Empower national and local humanitarian action" and thus, to work towards greater localization. Moreover, the [New York Declaration](#) and the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) both refer to the importance of engaging directly with forcibly displaced persons themselves. The [2019 Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) pledges equally stipulate engagement and partnerships with Persons of Concern (PoCs) and require UNHCR and partners to ensure that they are meaningfully engaged throughout the process. Engaging with them is also rooted in [UNHCR's community-based protection approach](#) and the [age, gender and diversity \(AGD\) policy](#), through which UNHCR committed to put PoCs at the centre of decisions that affect their lives and to ensure accountability to affected people. In addition to the GCR and the Grand Bargain, the COVID-19 pandemic has also undoubtedly confirmed the importance of localization, the participation revolution and of partnerships with local actors in addressing humanitarian challenges faced by PoCs. The pandemic has particularly shown that PoCs and groups-led by them are often the first responders in humanitarian emergencies and can provide support and services in areas where UNHCR and NGOs have limited or no access. Moreover, they are the most knowledgeable about their own needs, and the best advisers on what approaches are suited in their local area. Working with communities, is therefore necessary to better understand their needs, consider and support their response capacities, and to maintain a vital link to PoCs.

However, while the localization principle is widely endorsed, the modalities to develop localized responses are multifaceted and often slow to take root within our institutions. Although an important dimension, this goes well beyond directing additional resources to national NGOs to deliver services while encompassing the development of partnerships with local actors and the framing of community-based approaches, local leadership and empowerment, in support of socio-economic inclusion. Building on renewed dynamics emerging from the pandemic, consultations with NGOs can bring a transformative outcome in the localization agenda. Consultations held at regional level in 2021 generated recommendations that should be further discussed and fulfilled such as improving communication and strengthening channels between UNHCR and local organizations, calling to share partnership opportunities, to support existing capacities and to strengthen mutual learning between local and international actors. Greater focus should also be put on dismantling barriers to participation and seeking involvement at all stages to inform policies, programs, and supporting governments to be more inclusive.

2. Climate Action

The climate crisis is already amplifying vulnerability, driving displacement and making life harder for those already forced to flee. As a result, refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons are on the frontlines of the climate emergency. Climate change impacts are ramping up multiple challenges to people's safety, security, and dignity, for instance by increasing poverty, as well as to their sustainable access to food, water and livelihoods, while putting pressure on peaceful co-existence. Disasters displace millions of people every year – including many in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Most remain within their countries of residence, while those who do cross borders in search of safety and assistance tend to move to neighboring countries.

Climate Action is also, at its core, built on inclusive approaches and accountability to affected people, aiming to amplify local and marginalized voices in confronting related challenges. As such, Climate Action strives to ensure that all PoCs have equitable and non-discriminatory access to assistance and protection, and a say in policy and operational decisions that affect their lives. The sessions on Climate Action organized in the context of the 2021 Regional Consultations particularly highlighted the importance of the local impact of climate change and disasters as well as the importance of engaging with local actors in efforts related to climate action. This includes the need for increased advocacy and investing in research and support in knowledge-sharing and capacity-building.

In line with the UNHCR Strategic Framework for Climate Action, those sessions also highlighted the need to develop and strengthen collaborative approaches with a broad and growing range of partners to mobilize the capacity, resources, knowledge and influence required to meet current and future protection challenges related to the climate emergency. Building and strengthening displaced communities' resilience and preparedness to climate-related and other environmental risks was also critically emphasized. Those sessions reflected on the need for effective outcomes, clear roles for each partner and stakeholders and the need for accountability. Finally, the Consultations can be a space to exchange on UNHCR's efforts to support the Operationalization of the UNHCR Strategic Framework for Climate Action and support regional action plans.

C. OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Based on the above background and grounded in [the Principles of Partnership](#), the 2022 Global Consultations will pursue the following objectives:

1. Exchange on progress made on region specific recommendations and commitments made through the 2021 Regional Consultations and UNHCR-NGO Monthly Consultations; and review those that could be endorsed to become global recommendations.

2. Develop new recommendations to inform future collaboration between UNHCR and NGOs to prepare and respond to protection and solutions challenges related to localization and Climate Action.
3. Feed into global driven processes such as the UNHCR Strategic Framework for Climate Action and preparations for the second GRF in 2023.

The outcome of the consultations will also include exchange of good practices from different regions that may be replicated in other contexts. The consultations will benefit from robust engagement and contributions of International and National NGOs, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) and other organizations-led by PoCs to respective sessions. The outcomes, along with an overview of the debates, will be presented at the annual meeting of the UNHCR's Executive Committee in October 2022.

D. PRELIMINARY AGENDA¹

07 June 2022

- Advanced side events (fully online)

08 June 2022

- 13:30-15:00: **Opening session with the United Nations High-Commissioner for Refugees and ICVA's Executive Director** (hybrid)
 - *Update on 2021 regional consultations*
 - *Objectives of the 2022 global consultations*
 - *2022 NGO Innovation Award Ceremony for Women-led Organizations*
- 15:00-15:30: **Coffee break**
- 15:30-17:30: Special session on **Partnerships** (hybrid)
- 18:15-20:00: **Reception** (in-person only)

09 June 2022

- 9:00-10:30: Sub-session on Localization (hybrid)
- 10:30-11:00: **Coffee break**
- 11:00-12:30: Main session on **Localization with UNHCR's Assistant High-Commissioner for Protection** (hybrid)
- 12:30-14:00: **Light lunch**
- 14:00-15:30: Main session on **Climate Action with UNHCR's Assistant High-Commissioner for Operations** (hybrid)
- 15:30-16:00: **Coffee break**
- 16:00-17:30: Sub-session on Climate Action (hybrid)

10 June 2022

- 10:30-11:30: **Closing session with UNHCR's Deputy High-Commissioner and ICVA's Executive Director** (hybrid)
 - *Summary of recommendations*

E. PARTICIPATION

To ensure effective exchanges and concrete outcomes, the consultations will adhere to the following parameters and criteria:

¹ Please note that the time refers to the Central European Time.

- **Overall limit of in-person participation:** 200 delegates, from International and National NGOs, FBOs, and organisations led by PoCs. The number of delegates attending the Consultations in-person should not exceed 2 participants per NGO, FBO and organisations led by PoCs.
- **UNHCR in-person participation** of maximum 80 staff will join in person, in addition to the above quota. Participation from UNHCR staff will be encouraged to ensure a two-way dialogue. Other UN Agencies may request to register one staff per organization, as speaker or as ‘observer’.
- **Overall limit of online participation:** 170 delegates from International and National NGOs, FBOs, and organisations led by PoCs (150) and UNHCR (20).
- **Registration priority** will be given to organizations that work on forced displacement and those which:
 - have engaged in the 2021 Regional UNHCR-NGO Consultations and/or the Monthly UNHCR-NGO Consultations in 2021.
 - demonstrate expertise and experience in at least one of the two broad topics of discussion for this consultation (Localization and Climate action).
 - are ICVA members and/or implementing and/or operational partners of UNHCR in 2020 and 2021.

Each session will seek to be as interactive and concrete as possible, leaving room for exchanges to take place. In this perspective, the panel of speakers will draw mainly from UNHCR staff and representatives of NGOs/FBOs/organisations led by PoCs, while also considering possible other expert contributions (e.g. from other UN agencies, academia and Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement).

The first part of each session will consist in introducing concepts, information and objectives through either traditional but short presentations or through interview style dialogue between the moderator and panelists. A structured exchange with the audience will then take place. The moderator will wrap up the session by summarizing the main follow-up and action points coming up from the session. The moderator may be a UNHCR or NGO staff.

F. PREPARATION MODALITIES

Working Groups consisting of NGOs and UNHCR colleagues, chaired by ICVA and UNHCR, will work to prepare the sessions, including determining the focus of the discussion (sub-themes), agenda, speakers and moderator. Such preparation will include the review of the recommendations that came out of the 2021 Regional NGO consultations and Monthly UNHCR-NGO consultations, drafting of potential global recommendations and consideration of innovative approaches. Potential sub-themes for localization could be Engagement with Communities and Socio-economic inclusion of refugees for localization. For Climate Action the session could focus on collaborative approaches to address protection risks for populations displaced by climate change and disasters, and joint actions to strengthen the resilience, preparedness and inclusion of disaster-displaced people; as well as actions to green our operations (e.g. reduce our CO2 footprint).

ICVA/UNHCR PCS NGO and Civil Society team as of 17 March 2022.