



Switzerland. Participants come together to deep dive during a breakout session at UNHCR's Regional Consultation. 19 September, 2023 ©UNHCR/Ali Etrati Khosroshahi

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2023 REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs IN EUROPE – FOLLOW-UP AND PROGRESS

Introduction

The summary below of activities and progress linked with the recommendations made by NGO participants at the 2023 Regional Consultations with NGOs in Europe is provided not as a complete report, but rather should be read in conjunction and understood as a snapshot of the information available in other publications or platforms, such as:

- The Annual Report
- The AGD Report
- Global Focus
- Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report
- Grand Bargain Self-Reporting Exercise
- The Refugee Response Plans and their reports
- Operational Data Portal

Thematic Area 1: Inclusion in national systems



Promote inclusion from the onset and enable a whole-of-society approach to facilitate effective access to rights and services, successful integration in host societies and the empowerment of forcibly displaced and stateless persons to contribute to their host communities.

Activities and progress

1. Refugee Response Plans support the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people and their access to services, including health, education, social services as well as municipal services and solutions. They promote the alignment with the Global Compact for Refugees and the Sustainable Development Goals and complementarity among all stakeholders, adopting a “whole of society” and resilience-for-all approach.
 - Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation
 - Refugee Response Plan for Armenia
 - Refugee Response Plan in Türkiye (specific Country Chapter under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)).
2. The Regional Bureau for Europe developed a regional socio-economic inclusion strategy for the Ukraine refugee response, covering the period 2023 – 2025
3. The Regional Bureau for Europe produced a regional report on socio-economic inclusion good practices across Europe
4. The Regional Bureau for Europe led the development of inter-agency Multi-Sector Needs Assessment reports on economic inclusion and employment, education and health.
5. Research was conducted into refugee accommodation (France, Czech Republic) to identify effective and inclusive models and formulate recommendations to host.



Provide technical, financial and capacity support to civil society initiatives on employment, training and entrepreneurship interventions (including through the creation of a CoP on Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship).

Activities and progress

1. The Refugee Employment platform was expanded to Italy, Finland, The Netherlands and Bulgaria.
2. Financial inclusion policy briefs were produced at the regional level.
3. Country example: In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in partnership with other actors, focus was placed on matching employment opportunities (based on the market demand) with refugees’ skills and work experiences and continuously searching for employers interested in engaging refugees (initially through co-financing scheme); capacity building of local employment bureaus and raising awareness about the need to include refugee population into regular initiatives and programmes.



Conduct training programmes for government authorities working in refugee inclusion on issues related to human rights, migration and asylum to better sensitize them on the specific needs of refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless people.

Activities and progress

1. At the regional level, trainings were conducted for UN Country Teams on the inclusion of refugees and migrants in UNSDCFs through the Issue-Based Coalition on Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience.
2. Regional policy workshops on financial inclusion and entrepreneurship were organized in fall 2023.
3. UNHCR's Brussels and Strasbourg offices continued their ongoing work with the EU and Council of Europe.
4. Workshops, trainings and working groups took place at national and local level around refugees, forced displacement, legal obligations and processes, socio-economic inclusion, livelihoods and integration.
5. Country example: In Türkiye the UNHCR Country Operation established technical cooperation with the Justice Academy of Türkiye to provide capacity development trainings for judges, prosecutors, as well as prospective judges and prosecutors who serve at administrative, civil and criminal law branches and interact frequently with legal issues related to international protection applicants, status holders and temporary protection beneficiaries.



Guide and support local civil society actors through capacity strengthening to collect quality and comparable data on inclusion to better inform targeted and holistic integration strategies at a local level.

Activities and progress

1. Inclusion of local civil society in the Socio-Economic Insight Study. National Information Management Working Groups in RRP countries.
2. The Microdata library is available.
3. Country Example: In Bulgaria training was provided to RRP partners, including civil society actors, on the RRP monitoring framework, indicators and ActivityInfo reporting in January and February 2024 in both Bulgarian and Ukrainian.



Romania. Art therapy for Ukrainian refugee children
© UNHCR/Andrew-McConnell



Compile and share good practices on the UKR refugee response on how UKR refugee-hosting contexts are managing the transition from humanitarian assistance to inclusion in social protection systems, and convene fora to discuss, disseminate and share knowledge among all relevant stakeholders.

Activities and progress

1. At the regional level UNHCR produced mid-year and end-of-year reports for the RRP's illustrating how partners are supporting the main refugee-hosting countries in ensuring the inclusion of refugees in their social protection systems.
2. UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe organized NGO Consultations and regular NGO dialogues to discuss, disseminate and share knowledge among relevant stakeholders on topics related to inclusion and the transition from humanitarian assistance.
3. Many of these good practices, compiled by UNHCR as well as other partners, are published on the Operational Data Portal.
4. Country Example: UNHCR in Poland commissioned a study on the impact of refugees from Ukraine on the country's economy.



Advocate for accurate and fact-based media reporting on refugees and on forced displacement issues to counter the negative narrative and increasing divide in public opinion.

Activities and progress

1. Ahead of upcoming elections in Europe, several campaigns are being launched to counter misinformation and provide accurate facts.
2. Country Example: In the study commissioned by UNHCR to Deloitte, the research analyses the economic impact of refugees on the Polish economy, comprehensively considering the supply side of the economy, including labour supply and productivity, the demand, and estimating by how much this has collectively raised Polish GDP.



Proactively engage with local and national media through workshops, trainings, information-sharing in order to build trusting relationships that are beneficial in countering discrimination and false narratives.

Activities and progress

1. The Regional Bureau for Europe is currently increasing media engagement at the regional level through expansion of our media mailing lists, as well as diversifying mailing lists to include a wider range of targeted audiences, e.g. donors, NGOs, partners.
2. Country Example: Workshops with media have been carried out in several countries, including Armenia and Ukraine with plans for further expansion, for example in Bulgaria, with the aim of familiarizing local media with protection sensitive reporting.



Provide support to civil society organizations in the development of activities with a focus on building dialogue and fostering social cohesion at the local and national level.

Activities and progress

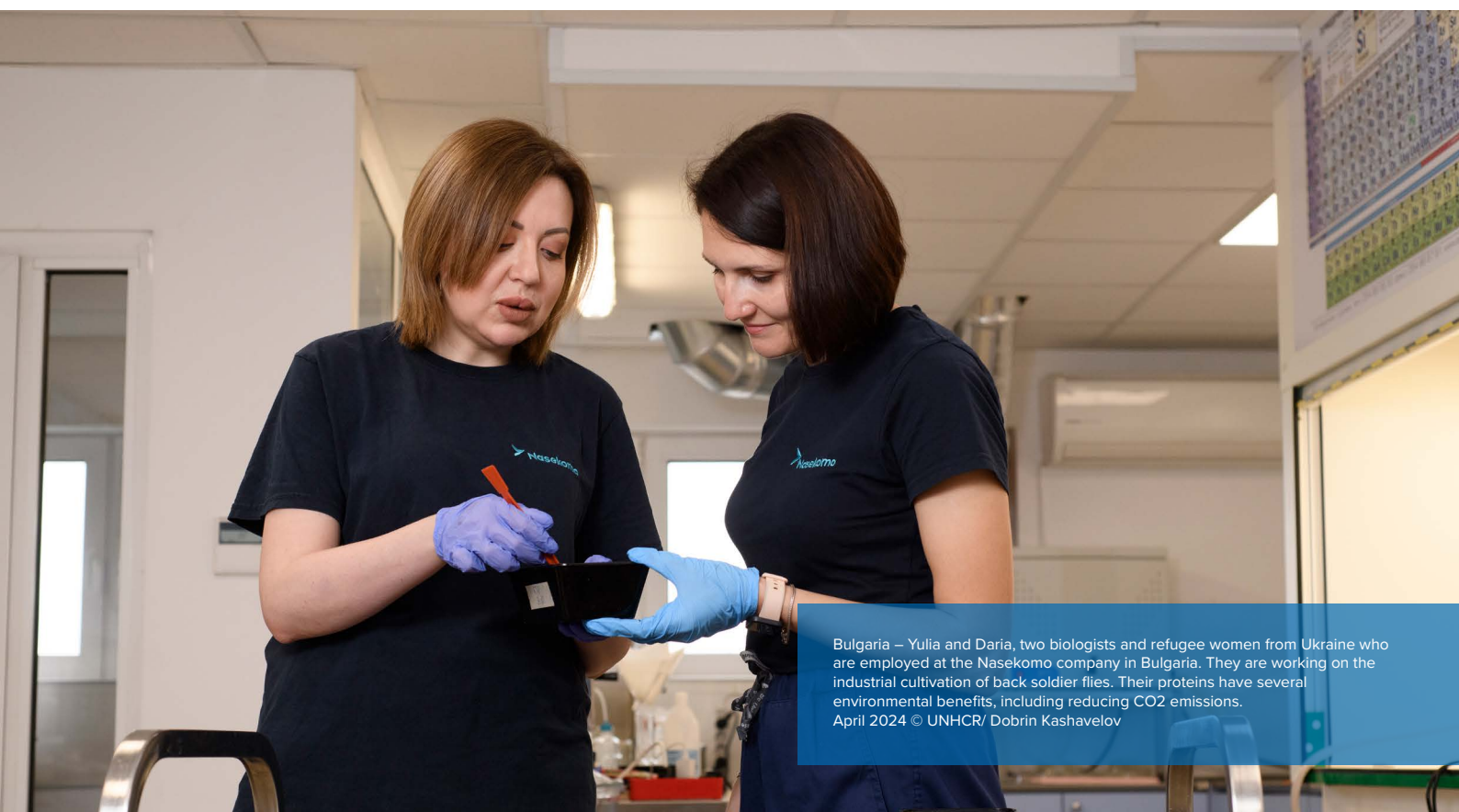
1. UNHCR developed and commissioned the translation of the Municipalities toolkit, Effective Inclusion of Refugees: participatory approaches for practitioners at the local level into 24 languages.
2. The Regional Bureau's Sport Strategy Action Plan focuses on Social Cohesion as one of its overarching strategic objectives.
3. Country Example: In Hungary, RRP partners focused on promoting social cohesion for refugees nationwide in 2023. Activities included catch-up classes, language courses, psycho-social support, cultural exchanges, and community awareness events. Partners also extended initiatives to the host community, fostering inclusive recreational and educational activities with Hungarian children accessing child-friendly spaces with refugees.



Conduct joint advocacy to raise awareness of the barriers and opportunities for the economic inclusion of forcibly displaced people especially among employers, and on the major gaps to its realization and implement workshops to bring stakeholders together to connect policies and their implementation on the ground.

Activities and progress

1. UNHCR developed an Inter-Agency report - Helping Hands - The Role of Housing Support and Employment Facilitation in Economic Vulnerability of Refugees from Ukraine, including recommendations on labor market inclusion efforts and interventions required to overcome main barriers to employment.
2. Country Example: UNHCR in Bulgaria organized two multi-stakeholder roundtables on socio-economic inclusion of refugees in October 2023 (one in Sofia, one in Plovdiv).



Bulgaria – Yulia and Daria, two biologists and refugee women from Ukraine who are employed at the Nasekomo company in Bulgaria. They are working on the industrial cultivation of back soldier flies. Their proteins have several environmental benefits, including reducing CO2 emissions.
April 2024 © UNHCR/ Dobrin Kashavelov

Thematic Area 2: Gender equality



Strengthen advocacy with government authorities to provide targeted and integrated interventions involving NGOs and local authorities (police, health, school, social welfare, etc.) to provide holistic support to refugees and forcibly displaced people, especially those who face multiple barriers to inclusion such as women.

Activities and progress

1. Regional: Women-led organizations in North Macedonia, Montenegro, Georgia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have been supported with 4 additional grant agreements.
2. Country example: A partner in the Czech Republic runs a holistic GBV center closely cooperating with all local authorities. In 2024, UNHCR launched a formal partnership with a prominent local women-led organization (Feminoteka) in Poland for the implementation of an integrated programme for prevention and response to GBV. GBV prevention and response is mainstreamed in all other protection partnerships implemented across the country. Under the 3RP in Türkiye, trainings targeting public institutions and NGOs/CSOs on protection standards, PSEA and GBV response aspects along with AAP are provided to support capacity-building efforts of partners.



Continue to strongly advocate for women and their rights, and promote intersectional approaches and gender-sensitive planning for integration programming for refugees and forcibly displaced people, which seek to meaningfully engage all stakeholders, especially women-led organizations.

Activities and progress

1. In the region, 8 new grant agreements to Refugee-Led Organizations and Women-Led Organizations were launched around female empowerment and community engagement, and 20 on psychosocial support, benefitting women and girls.
1. UNHCR in the Czech Republic has 3 partners focusing respectively on anti-human-trafficking, GBV, and MHPSS primarily serving women and girls.
1. The RRP in Türkiye aims to mainstream age, gender and diversity approaches across the refugee response in Türkiye and highlights its overall objective of protection mainstreaming in its strategic communication and advocacy efforts with stakeholders.
1. An inter-agency assessment was conducted in Poland with all relevant stakeholders on coordination needs and priorities for GBV with actions taken following the findings. 14% of the respondents identified as women-led and 60% as either Civil Society Organizations or Refugee-Led Organizations.



Engage women and girls in decision-making and meaningfully incorporate their perspectives as experts, at all decision-making levels and at the programme design, planning and monitoring stages of humanitarian and social protection interventions.

Activities and progress

1. Women leaders are participating on all panels and in fora of experts.
2. UNHCR is committed to achieving and maintaining gender parity at all grades and to have a workforce that is diverse, inclusive and representative of all regions.
3. The majority of participants at NGO Consultations were women, as are Bureau staff and senior management.
4. Country Example: In Poland, women and girls represented an overwhelming majority of the respondents of the MSNA (89%) and Participatory Assessments (78%) conducted in 2023 reflecting views of forcibly displaced women and girls with diverse backgrounds.



Thematic Area 3: Engagement of RLOs and meaningful refugee participation



Systematically include local civil society actors in national coordination structures during emergency responses at the local, national and regional levels from the outset and at all stages of the programme cycle, disseminating transparent information at regular intervals and in local languages, and recognizing local expertise

Activities and progress

1. Local civil society actors are actively involved in the Ukraine Situation RRP (81 per cent of appealing organizations in 2023 are national and local NGOs) and Armenia Emergency Response Plan: appealing in the plan, actively participating or co-chairing sectoral working groups, reporting on achievements and challenges, contributing to the Multi-Sector Needs Assessments.
2. Additionally local national organizations, including Refugee-Led Organizations, Stateless-led Organizations, Women-Led Organizations and faith-based organizations are involved across planning exercises.
3. Country Example: In Hungary, RLOs are actively engaged in the RRP as appealing partners (4); an RLO participated as presenter in the launch of the 2024 RRP (UREC). RLOs and Civil Society Organizations have been active in the preparation, chairing and in the development of advocacy notes as part of the Refugee Coordination Forum. They regularly attend and coordinate through the active Working Groups.



Advocate for the participation and representation of local civil society actors including NGOs and RLOs to meaningfully advise input to national and regional level policy-making fora and platforms and facilitate their attendance through targeted capacity strengthening, training, technical assistance and financial support

Activities and progress

1. RBE placed significant focus on Refugee/ Stateless-Led Organizations in the Regional NGO Consultations, with close to a quarter of participants representing RLOs from across the region.
2. National NGOs and/or RLOs have played a leading role in the regional and country-level launches of the Ukraine Situation RRP, bringing the voices of these important actors to policy-making fora and platforms.
3. Stateless-led organizations and stateless individuals actively participated in the UNHCR-OSCE Regional Conference on Access to Civil Documentation and Prevention of Statelessness in South-Eastern Europe, in Skopje in October 2023.
4. Country Example: UNHCR Türkiye supported the establishment of the National Reference Group (NRG) in Türkiye as envisioned under the Grand Bargain 2.0. The overall objective of the NRG is to move forward localization efforts in Türkiye. In this regard, UNHCR Türkiye contributes and provides support to the NRG through its membership in both the Secretariat and the Steering Committee of the NRG and also through the possibility of funding support subject to the completion and evaluation of a concrete action plan and logical framework. UNHCR also actively contributes to NRG Working Groups on funding, coordination, and partnerships.



Establish refugee advisory bodies consisting of refugees selected through a transparent selection process to participate at regional and global level policy decision-making platforms

Activities and progress

1. UNHCR Advisory Board established under the Global Compact on Refugees.
2. NGO statement to ExCom.
3. Country Example: UNHCR in The Netherlands provided funding to an NGO partner for the establishment of a statelessness community group, the Stateless Rights Collective.



Recognize and seek to address the inherent imbalances of power of UNHCR, INGOs, academics and others in comparison to local NGOs and RLOs and advocate for fair and equal standards for their participation at high-level engagements, especially compensation for time (currently pro bono work).

Activities and progress

1. Localization tip-sheet and sheet on Localization in UNHCR-Led Coordination Structures..
2. RLOs were financially supported to attend the Global Refugee Forum, the regional and the Global NGO Consultations, and the RRP launch.
3. Country Example: Poland supported the establishment of a pooled fund hosted by a national organization in support of polish NGOs. Funding mobilized include contributions from the private sector.



Development of a mapping of good practices and a 'how-to' toolkit in the area of community engagement and participation in decision-making processes, to be shared widely with relevant stakeholders, including government officials, UNHCR and NGOs/RLOs.

Activities and progress

1. The UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe conducted a survey to better understand the landscape related to community engagement and accountability to affected people in Europe, as well as to identify good practices and gaps. The survey results are being used to inform UNHCR's community engagement and AAP strategy in Europe.
2. Good practices in community engagement and participation in decision-making processes are underway and will be published in UNHCR's global AGD report.
3. UNHCR is working with refugee committees, advisory boards and refugee-led organizations in Ireland, Moldova and Belgium to voice their needs and provide feedback to inform government decision-making and programs.
4. Country Example: In Switzerland, UNHCR has engaged with the Swiss Refugee Council to discuss collaboration with civil society in refugee protection, emphasizing the need for participation and empowerment of refugee and stateless-led organizations.