



Global Compact on Refugees: 5th Thematic discussion

15 November 2017 – Palais de Nations, Geneva

Panel II: “Whole-of-society response to large movements of refugees and protracted situations”

Faith-based actors in the solutions

Statement by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC),
Caritas Internationalis and ACT Alliance

I am speaking on behalf of the worldwide, faith-based networks of Caritas Internationalis, ACT Alliance and ICMC, with presence, experience, know-how and a habit of constructive partnership—both globally and locally. In our faith and in what we do, we strive to respond to the most vulnerable among us, including refugees. It’s what we believe as a core matter of faith.

We also have faith in working together, and we have faith—and experience—in building practical solutions for the common good. We do not discriminate or proselytize in what we do: we serve refugees, migrants and host communities regardless of their faith. Our action is driven by respect for human dignity, solidarity and compassion for the most vulnerable and a deep understanding of and rootedness in the local context.

For refugees, what is a comprehensive response? It is a *continuum of protection*: the full range of identification, immediate and full-term needs- and rights-based assistance, accompaniment, and advocacy with duty bearers, aimed at solutions of genuine welcome, integration or reintegration. A continuum in which refugees move from vulnerability to self-sufficiency and social contribution.

Sometimes it is suggested that faith is not concrete—when in fact, faith can motivate and achieve some of the most concrete results imaginable. Concretely, then, for the Global Compact on Refugees, three examples, global and local:

1. **Resettlement and other pathways:** We implore states and other actors to remember—and have faith!—in how the world can come together to respond collectively, comprehensively and successfully to large displacements. A generation ago, that’s precisely what so many of us did. Let’s raise it up in the Global Compact! 70 countries, UNHCR, IOM and NGOs like us, in partnership to save and move 2 million Indochinese boat people, their families and other refugees through safe, orderly and regular channels of resettlement, family reunification and labour migration. Over a twenty year period, ICMC and our members resettled over 500,000 Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodians mainly to the United States.
2. **Peace building:** Emergency response is not only about providing materials but also psycho-social support, critical social services and pastoral care that promote integral human development for every person. In addition, local faith-based organizations, since they are part of the community, are well positioned to reduce vulnerability, manage risk and propose local solutions responding to local needs, especially in a protracted situations. For example, Caritas Uganda is currently implementing peace building projects in the *Bidi Bidi* settlement in Uganda. The activities include organizing community dialogues and mediation meetings, forming local peace committees that bring together refugees and host communities. Caritas Uganda is also planning to form a National

Alliance for Peace Building involving humanitarian agencies, the local Church and youth delegates to engage and promote in national dialogue.

3. **Tools for improving faith sensitivity in humanitarian responses, including in refugee contexts:** ACT Alliance member Lutheran World Federation (LWF), in collaboration with Islamic Relief Worldwide, has been developing '**Guidelines for Faith-sensitive Psychosocial Programming**' to assist humanitarian practitioners in engaging not only with faith-based actors at the local level, but also with faith aspects in the lives of the people they aim to serve, particularly when designing and implementing psychosocial programming. The Guidelines, to be published in early 2018, will address issues such as how concretely to:
 - identify religious leaders and faith partners and strengthen their capacities and ability to participate in the humanitarian system
 - identify those with whom it is and is not appropriate to work
 - identify factors in people's faith identity which will be a relevant element in their coping mechanism, so it can be included in psychosocial support
 - draw on existing structures within faith communities to support those coping mechanisms
 - constructively engage with aspects of faith communities' beliefs and practices which may not be consistent with humanitarian principles
 - sensitize faith leaders to key challenges
 - take people's faith identity seriously in other sectors: food security and nutrition, shelter, WASH, etc.

Let's have faith in what we can do together—and with a Compact worth agreeing to!

Thank you.