

2020 UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs

Recommendations

Opening and Closing Sessions

For UNHCR and NGOs:

1. Organise regional consultations to complement global ones. Conclusions and recommendations from regional consultations should feed into the global consultations and vice versa for cross-fertilization and cross-regional learning. It is important to agree and circulate a calendar for these consultations well ahead of time (e.g. at least three months before each meeting) to allow the broadest possible participation in the dialogue.
2. Ensure that each consultation produces a set of recommendations that inform not only relevant regional and global-level meetings, but also UNHCR Standing Committees and Executive Committees, the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges and other consultative processes to build synergies; and for them to agree on a mechanism that allow follow-up on the implementations of these recommendations.
3. Continue to share lessons learned from UNHCR and NGOs' response to COVID-19 until early next year. This exercise will allow us to further reflect on what has worked and what needs improvement and better preparedness plans.
4. Improve the collaboration with Refugee-Led Organisations, which have been critical in the COVID-19 response and find ways to fund them and to strengthen their capacity, while seizing opportunities to build back better, to improve preparedness and develop Age, Gender and Diversity sensitive response plans.

For donors:

5. Proactively engage in high-level discussions on better managing and sharing risk, particularly in the context of the Grand Bargain's ongoing work on aid reform. Preliminary learnings from the COVID-19 response show that for the humanitarian system to become more agile, UN agencies and NGOs need increased levels of donor trust, while remaining accountable for their performance.

Session on Resilience and Inclusion

For UNHCR and NGOs:

1. Conduct joint and solid advocacy to include refugees in all their diversity in national social protection measures and socio-economic response plans. Advocacy efforts should be comprehensive and should cover all aspects of inclusion; from assessments to responses and to sustainable recovery plans. NGOs, civil society and UNHCR should join their efforts, including through their comparative advantages. Learning from the COVID-19 response, the joint advocacy should include fostering positive public perceptions of refugees, removing restrictions on the right to work for refugees, access to finance, and expanded social safety nets, and ensuring social protection systems are equipped to meet the needs of displaced populations.
2. Step up livelihoods and increase support to foster better resilience, which is as necessary as ever. This includes joint efforts from NGOs and UNHCR to adapt their service delivery to restricted movements as well as to provide guidance to refugees on their rights and on accessing services.
3. Support evidence based responses and data, strengthen efforts to collect and disseminate emerging practices relating to self-reliance and inclusion during COVID-19, highlighting as well refugee-led initiatives and practices. This will also include increased data collection and analysis, particularly on effective program approaches and models to facilitate refugee self-reliance.

4. Foster and support meaningful refugee participation, including of children and young persons (as additions to the workforce, as representatives or as consultants) in responses and initiatives carried out by both NGOs and UNHCR.

For Member States:

5. Develop an enabling environment and multi-year flexible funding for livelihoods and economic inclusion programmes. As recognized at the Global Refugee Forum, promoting resilience and inclusion is crucial and a particular area of focus is ensuring the survival of existing refugee/IDP businesses and livelihoods, and helping those who have lost their livelihood recover quickly.
6. Recognize refugees' skills during a pandemic. Ensure refugees can contribute to the response, for example by fast-tracking the recruitment of refugee health workers. In the long-term, this should go beyond health care or the pandemic response and translate into durable inclusion measures, including the right to work and access to local integration.

Session on Protection Considerations

COVID-19: Community-Based Protection in the Spotlight

UNHCR's commitment:

UNHCR recognizes the critical role communities play in their own protection, and reaffirms its long-standing commitment to working in partnership with displaced and host communities to craft effective, timely and inclusive protection responses informed by the priorities of women, men, girls and boys of all ages and backgrounds and building on their capacities, skills and experiences. It is important to consider age, gender, and diversity, including disability, in all community-based protection and responses, given that communities are not homogenous. We will continue to invest in the identification of innovative ways to enhance these critical partnerships, including, for example, in flexible funding and other arrangements which allow refugee- and IDP-led organizations to manage all aspects of projects aimed at enhancing their community's protection.

For Member States/Donors:

The pandemic has placed an unprecedented spotlight on the critical role that communities play in crafting and implementing actions to enhance their own protection. The lessons drawn from our collective response to COVID-19 have shown that pre-pandemic investment in community-based protection initiatives, to complement the work of national protection systems, has resulted in more rapid, effective and adaptable responses to the protection issues arising from the global health crisis, including addressing Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and child protection issues. With these fresh lessons confirming once again the central importance of community-based protection, we recommend that donors:

1. Actively acknowledge the critical importance of community-based approaches to protection, ensure that community-based protection is prioritized from the onset of a crisis and promote the holistic integration of active community engagement in all protection activities, including Child Protection, prevention, mitigation and response to SGBV, as well protection against sexual exploitation and abuse.
2. Ensure that support to communities' own protection response in no way overshadows the primary responsibility of States and other duty bearers. The work with and support to community-based protection structures should avoid establishing parallel structures, but rather enable communities to access effective national protection mechanisms, including national child protection, and GBV prevention, mitigation and response services.
3. Enable local actors, particularly community-based organizations, to have access to resources made available for protection responses, including by addressing administrative and political barriers, and allocating dedicated, flexible funding to community-based organizations.

For partners (UN and NGOs):

As recognized in the Global Compact on Refugees, communities are often best placed to identify existing as well as emerging protection needs, among at-risk and marginalized groups, and how these can be effectively addressed. Community-based protection is a process which includes the

careful building of relationships of trust with diverse groups across displaced and host communities and investment in their capacities and resources to identify and respond to the protection issues they face. With these important considerations in mind, we recommend that UNHCR, other UN actors and NGOs:

4. Integrate community-based approaches to protection in all programmes. This includes recognizing and supporting with technical advice and resources the role of affected communities, in all their diversity, in identifying and addressing their protection needs and working in partnership with them in the design, delivery, monitoring and subsequent optimization of protection responses. Such partnership work should reflect the full age, gender and diversity (AGD) spectrum.
5. Where access is limited, develop tools and approaches for working remotely for protection response and training of staff on remote modalities including remote Communication with Communities.
6. In all community-based protection initiatives, take particular care not to transfer risk and/or increase the burden on communities by systematically agreeing with them a clear delineation of roles based on a shared understanding and analysis of the protection context.

Session on Climate Action

For UNHCR and NGOs:

1. Increase collaboration with local authorities, displaced populations, host communities and grassroots organizations in order to strengthen community-based preparedness and response to disasters, as well as to establish culturally appropriate and context specific adaptation strategies that will increase resilience to the effects of climate change. Emphasize inclusion of women, youth, elderly people and people with disabilities in decision making and leadership.
2. Promote action research with local communities to ensure their experiences and needs are effectively documented and used in advocacy and policy development at all levels.
3. Use UNHCR legal protection expertise and experience to support stakeholders when policies and frameworks are developed on national, regional and global levels to enhance the protection of people displaced or at risk of displacement in the context of climate change and disasters. In particular, promote the use of UNHCR's '[Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters](#)' at national level with lawmakers and other stakeholders.
4. Move from a gender sensitive to a gender transformative approach, emphasizing the leadership of women and girls in Climate Action.
5. Increase joint messaging on the urgency of Climate Action, and use lessons learned from COVID-19 in order to apply them to Climate Action.
6. Prioritize greening of offices, transportation and operations considering adapted working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This should involve adopting and improving organizational environmental policies and ensuring their effectiveness through evaluation.
7. Facilitate regular UNHCR-NGO exchanges on best practices and lessons learned (greening operations, clean energy, disaster preparedness and risk reduction) that will help inform the development of UNHCR's Regional Plans of Action, which will operationalize its Strategic Framework on Climate Action.

For Member States:

8. Actively endorse, echo, and take relevant measures in Climate Action in line with the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Strategy, in particular the six climate-positive actions to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic ("investing in green jobs, no bail outs for polluting industries, ending fossil-fuel subsidies, taking climate risks into account in all financial and policy decisions, working together, and most importantly, leave no one behind").
9. Invest in climate change adaptation and enhance preparedness for disasters and other climate risks in order to avert and minimize displacement in the context of climate change and disasters,

including along lines advocated in UNDRR's [Words into Action guidelines – Disaster displacement: How to reduce risk, address impacts and strengthen resilience](#).

10. Support and intensify action to ensure adequate and timely funding for Loss and Damage, specifically in addressing climate displacement.
11. Ensure the inclusion of refugees in consultation on national and local adaptation plans and nationally determined contributions under the UNFCCC through a participatory and human rights-based approach.
12. Increase investment in building predictive and anticipatory capacities promoting early action before crises occurs in order to reduce its impact.

For all stakeholders:

13. Actively engage in Global Refugee Forum pledges related to the Clean Energy Challenge and other linked to protection and assistance of displaced populations of all ages, genders, and diversities in the context of disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation.
14. Promote Climate Action policies based on practical guidance tools such as those issued by UNDRR, and ensure complementarity between different policy frameworks available for their advancement, especially the Paris Agreement, the Global Compact on Refugees, the Global Compact on Migration, Sendai Framework on DRR and New Urban Agenda as well as the work of the UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement.

Side Event on Partnership Agreements in Pandemics

Recognition by NGOs:

NGOs welcome and recognise the significant strides UNHCR has made toward a stronger framework for partnership in the past months. They also appreciate UNHCR's leadership and openness in information sharing and working through challenges with partners from the very beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

For UNHCR:

1. Continue efforts to simplify and harmonize its funded partnership procedures for 2021 agreements, particularly through the adoption of the Money Where it Counts protocol, and during the course of 2021 for the following years. This should continue until all 14 initiatives agreed as a result of the January 2020 UNHCR-NGO Partnership meeting have been completed.
2. Convene more regional bureau meetings on operational/issues and strengthens efforts to ensure regular, transparent, consultative communication. This should also help maintain coherence in the interpretation and application of regulations and guidance across bureaus and offices.
3. Further support local partners, community-based organizations and Refugee-Led Organizations in their efforts to strengthen their capacity and scale up.
4. Accept – as other UN entities – any assessment of a partner's PSEA capacity, provided it has been done within 24 months prior to the issuance of the Common Assessment Tool (28/09/20) and that it substantively covers the same eight standards that are in the [Common Assessment Tool](#). Standards include mandatory training; adequate reporting procedures; appropriate action in past cases; and adequate investigative and assistance capacities, including referral pathways where partners do not have in-house investigation/assistance capacities.
5. Revitalize efforts towards multi-year agreements, including multi-year funding.

For UNHCR and NGOs:

6. Seek strategic partnerships that go beyond individual project agreements and strengthen joint and/or coordinated advocacy and operational positions.