Global Compact on Refugees (GCR):
ICVA Update
June 2017

The month of June was pivotal for NGOs involvement in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) process.

**CRRF countries and regions:**

In CRRF countries, major landmarks were reached. On 2 June, the CRRF was launched in Tanzania and a Secretariat created, inclusive of national and international NGOs: Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) and Plan International, with an alternate role for Save the Children and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Through the CRRF, the government of Tanzania announced its intention to implement a radical shift in refugee protection towards a more systematic and sustainable response, through a whole-of-society approach. **Further details on the approach** were provided by the Tanzania Ministry of Home Affairs.

In Uganda, NGOs’ representation and role in the CRRF Secretariat and Steering Committee remain unclear but civil society was very active in the lead-up to and proceedings of the Uganda Solidarity Summit, particularly through **side events** and an **Interagency Call to Action**. NGOs also developed targeted advocacy. For example, Save the Children shared with the Government of Uganda a **costed education plan for South Sudanese refugees** demonstrating that universal schooling in crises like these is both affordable and achievable.

At the Summit, **donors and governments pledged about USD 432 million**. While welcoming those commitments, NGOs expressed concern about the gap between funding needs for a proper refugee response and pledges actually made. For example, Oxfam issued a press release welcoming the international community’s new commitments but noting that these “**continue to fall short of meeting the needs of refugees**” in Uganda. Others also asked whether the pledges were really representing new funding and called for swift, coherent and transparent allocation. Nevertheless, the UN Secretary General and the President of Uganda considered the Summit as a success and a good start towards further international contributions. Statements made on this occasion along with other documentation can be found here. The Summit also resulted in the adoption of the **Kampala Declaration on Refugees**.

Also worthy of note, in mid-June the **Parliament of Kenya passed the 2016 Refugee Bill** through its third and final stage. Now awaiting the President’s signature, the proposed law would allow refugees or asylum seekers with professional qualifications to be entitled to work permits. This development adds to a trend of legislative reforms in **Djibouti**, Tanzania and Ethiopia which may result in greater freedom of movements and access to work and services for refugees in those countries. This trend is in line with the commitments made by those countries at the 20 September 2016 Leaders’ Summit and may result in a better enabling environment for the successful application of the CRRF.
At the regional level, the **Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD)** organized – with the support of the German development agency, GIZ – a two-day consultation with partners (29-30 June) on the roadmap and results framework for the ‘**Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees**’ of 25 March. The main objectives of this meeting were to: 1) Review and update the draft road map and results framework for implementation of the Nairobi Action Plan, making sure it is in line with the Nairobi Declaration and setting out strategic objectives, outcomes, indicators and key milestones; 2) Consolidate information on Partner interventions and financial commitments across the result areas of the results framework. On this occasion, ICVA provided comments on the proposed roadmap, particularly pertaining to NGO engagement. ICVA also highlighted the importance of establishing links between the global and regional discussion levels, especially as the IGAD process will include a set of regional thematic meetings on specific issues, such as education, self-reliance or third country settlement which may benefit from or inform the Geneva Thematic Discussions for the Global Compact on Refugees.

Relatively little concrete information has so far transpired with regard to the practical **application of the CRRF in Central America**. However, in June, UNHCR announced that the CRRF would be applied in three more countries of Central America: Guatemala, Costa Rica and Mexico in addition to Honduras. At the regional level, representatives of the Governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) held a Regional Dialogue on Protection as part of sub-regional efforts in the framework of a comprehensive response to refugees, focusing on regional cooperation, shared responsibility and international principles of protection in the area of human rights and refugees. UNHCR also released a document highlighting details about the **process and timeline for the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (CRPSF) for Central America and Mexico**. In support of the development of the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees and building on existing regional cooperation and commitments, including the Brazil Plan of Action and the San Jose Action Statement, the CRPSF will develop in each participating country an operational plan setting out strategies, programs and actions required to strengthen protection, as well to improve conditions in countries of origin and promote sustainable solutions. The CRPSF will also include a range of concrete and measurable responsibility-sharing mechanisms amongst different stakeholders in order to support the operational plan and strengthen regional cooperation.

**Geneva-based developments:**

In Geneva, a month-long of GCR related events started with a UNHCR Briefing (6 June) focusing mainly on Somalia. UNHCR Special Envoy on the Somali Refugee Situation, Ambassador Affey stressed the importance of a regional approach and indicated that a National Dialogue process will soon unfold in Somalia and connect to the CRRF process. On
this occasion, UNHCR also presented a first ‘Draft Monitoring Framework and Indicators for the Application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response’ to be discussed and further developed with States and other partners. ICVA relayed suggestions and observations from NGOs in the region, including the importance of working with NGOs at the regional level as well and the necessity to organize a regional CRRF webinar and a CRRF workshop on the Somali situation. Members can access notes from this briefing on ICVA website.

The Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (12-14 June) then offered the opportunity to discuss responsibility-sharing aspects, which were particularly highlighted by NGOs. Concerns were also raised about the low levels of resettlement for populations from Africa and parts of Asia. The High Commissioner particularly reminded that “in a world where making peace has become so difficult, resettlement is an increasingly important protection tool” and “important for responsibility-sharing as it can help create protection space for those not resettled”.

Held at the same time, the Global Conference on Children on the Move (Berlin, 12-13 June) was the opportunity to launch the working document on “Child Rights in the Global Compacts” laying out goals, targets and indicators – in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – through which the five key commitments to child rights outlined in the New York Declaration can be operationalized across both global compacts. This working document and its 4-page synthesis are the basis for a follow-up advocacy strategy on how to promote a common approach to protecting the rights of children on the move at the national and global levels. The working document was also discussed at a side event on the margins of the June UNHCR Standing Committee (29 June) and prominent in discussions on the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration at the 2017 GFMD Civil Society Days (29 June-1 July).

Immediately following the ATCR, the UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations – co-organized by the UNHCR Partnership Section and ICVA – gathered about 600 NGO delegates and UNHCR counterparts to debate the CRRF application and the GCR process. The High Commissioner echoed NGOs call for more refugee participation in the CRRF and GCR processes, while the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection stressed that the GCR should reinforce “the core of the core of UNHCR’s protection mandate” in an era when instances of refoulement continue to occur, as shocking, egregious violations of international refugee law. For his part, the UNHCR Director for Comprehensive Responses highlighted the whole-of-society approach. The report on those consultations will be presented in October.
at the UNHCR Executive Committee and constitute an important NGO contribution to the debates on a future Global Compact on Refugees.

To assist NGOs’ engagement in those consultations – and more broadly to support all humanitarian actors’ involvement in the whole process leading to the adoption of the GCR – ICVA issued a Briefing Paper on “The Global Compact on Refugees Explained”. This paper was also the basis of a webinar on “Demystifying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact on Refugees” provided by ICVA on 8 June.

Moreover, ICVA coordinated the development of an ‘NGO Reflection Paper on the Global Compact on Refugees’, which was circulated in draft form at the Annual Consultations to feed into the debates before being finalized ahead of the first Thematic Discussion on the GCR. Other NGOs and networks also issued background papers ahead of the Annual Consultations, including InterAction’s “Solutions With Rights” paper and APRRN’s “Reflections on the Significance of the New York Declaration for the Asia Pacific Region”.

The UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations were also the occasion to hold the first face-to-face meeting of the UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Reference Group. The main outcome of this meeting was to look at the possibility of organizing a retreat of the Reference Group in the fall, to work on specific issues such as strategic advocacy and increasing refugee participation in the CRRF and GCR processes.

Ahead of the UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations, UNHCR had launched a Survey on CRRF Good Practices as well as a CRRF Global Digital Portal designed to support the CRRF’s multi-stakeholder approach by enabling all actors involved in the response to access information on the CRRF in different countries.

Following the UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations, members of the UNHCR CRRF Task Team, including Daniel Endres (Director for Comprehensive Responses) flew to Washington DC to participate in a break-out session on ‘Leadership on the Global Refugee Crisis: A Progress Report’ at the 2017 InterAction Forum (20-22 June).

In Geneva, on 19 June, ICVA participated to a meeting co-hosted by the Government of Canada and Save the Children on ‘Leaders’ Summit on Refugees Follow Up: An Expert Level Meeting on Improving Refugees’ Access to Education’. The discussions covered topics such as the implementation of the Summit education commitments, including gaps; improving data on refugee education; innovation and good practices to expand refugee access to education; as well as financing and partnerships for refugee education.

On 22 June, ICVA contributed to a side event organized on the margins of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment looking at ‘The CRRF – Potentially a Game Changer in Large Scale and Protracted Refugee Situations’, with interventions from the Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations in Geneva and the Deputy Director for the Ethiopian Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA). Also on the panel, ICVA provided remarks highlighting ten ideas heard from NGOs for the CRRF to succeed and become a game changer.
From 28 to 30 June, the 69th meeting of the UNHCR Standing Committee provided another opportunity to review progress on the application of the CRRF in selected countries and the GCR process. Background documentation, including the Note on international protection, the papers on ‘Strengthening humanitarian-development cooperation in forced displacement situations’ and on ‘Follow-up to the New York Declaration and the comprehensive refugee response framework’ provided useful details as well as the Presentation by the Director for Comprehensive Responses. The Introductory remarks by the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) also provided interesting elements especially as Mr. Volker Türk emphasized that “we can use the refugee protection experience as a catalyst to address broader questions of protecting people on the move” and that “we need to draw upon lessons learned from both the fields of refugee protection and migration to consider how they can be mutually beneficial”. The NGO perspectives on the CRRF and GCR were highlighted in statements on International Protection, on Strengthening the Humanitarian-Development Cooperation in forced displacement situations and on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

Finally, following a decision from its Governing Board, the Solutions Alliance ended its activities on 30 June 2017. As noted in UNHCR’s 2016 Global Report (p.40), “the Solutions Alliance will transition itself into existing initiatives, such as the CRRF, that are also committed to reinforcing collaborative actions in support of solutions to conflict-induced displacement. Information on the Solutions Alliance website will be archived on UNHCR’s IMF portal after 30 June 2017, to remain accessible for future initiatives.

Information on ICVA and NGO activities, articles and statements that relate to the CRRF and Global Compact on Refugees can be found on ICVA’s website and by following and @ICVA_Displaced on Twitter. ICVA also welcomes any information that may be shared in order to foster a more collective approach to the CRRF and Global Compact on Refugees. To request and provide information, please contact: jerome.elie@icvanetwork.org