Forced Migration Working Group

Online
21 July 2021 (15:00-16:30)


Agenda:
- Follow-up discussion and decision on the NGO ExCom Side Event
- Debriefing of UNHCR 81st Standing Committee (July) and information-sharing related to the upcoming 82nd Standing Committee (September) and 72nd Executive Committee (October)
- The High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement
- AoB.

1. Follow-up discussion and decision on the NGO ExCom Side Event.

- The call for NGOs feedback on the theme for the 2021 UNHCR ExCom NGO side event was circulated by e-mail several times. Based on previous exchanges with NGOs during the Forced Migration Working Groups, we have zoomed on 3 options for the theme to be addressed at this side event on 1) Externalization of Protection; 2) Localization and inclusion of displaced populations; 3) NGO perspectives on the December High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM).
- Results: match between externalization (7 votes) and localization (6 votes). HLOM got 3 votes.
- Details on NGOs’ choices behind their votes: some highlighted the sensitivity of the externalization notion, and referred to the discussion that happened at the June FMWG and mentioned referring to “responsibility-sharing” instead of externalization. There were also interesting comments around the messages it sends to have a side event that might signal that it is not that important, and some said this should be on the main agenda. The argument might be true for UNHCR but for NGOs, it is our space, and everybody understands that NGOs bring elements that we think are lacking and should be highlighted.
- On localization and inclusion, the idea is not to have an event on localization of humanitarian action broadly. The NGO ExCom side event should focus on displacement, so it will be localization within refugee situations, forcibly displaced populations. Inclusion refers to displaced population access to national systems, inclusion into development plans and NGOs recommendations and how localization aspect plays into inclusion.
- As follow-up of the previous FMWG meeting, ICVA reached out to UNHCR to ask, on behalf of its members, the organization of a meeting between relevant UNHCR staff and ICVA members to learn more about UNHCR approach, concerns, and potential plans related to externalization as it could inform NGOs own activities, including possibly for complementary advocacy. ICVA is waiting for UNHCR feedback, delayed by the holidays.
- At UNHCR 82nd Standing Committee, UNHCR alluded to externalization saying again that it is one of the greatest threats to the asylum system and rejected efforts by States to avoid their responsibilities to provide protection. No States mentioned externalization as such, but some refugee host countries called on “equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing”.
- Welcome NGOs suggestions.
Women’s Refugee Commission
- Voted for externalization given that the event will be during the ExCom with UNHCR and States presence and it is an urgent issue that has not been discussed for a long time. There is a lot already done on localization and inclusion.

INTEROS
- Externalization is the most important one and the topic least talked about but wondering the message it sends as part of a side event.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Center
- Voted for localization even if externalization is also a very important topic. UNHCR has talked about externalization, and it is also a highly politicized and complex issue, e.g. can we talk about the EU-Turkey deal in the same way as how Denmark is dealing with African countries?

Asylum Access
- Externalization and localization are both important topics. If we choose to go with localization, we can share displacement experience - 22 years as a refugee - and advocate for refugee inclusion for 15 years.

Act for Peace
- Initially voted for localization and are also very supportive of the HLOM topic. We struggled to decide whether to put localization or externalization first. Act for Peace is supportive of what everyone has said around externalization and would like to change our vote to that.
- We are actively engaged on the issue of localization and inclusion and voted for that reason, but NGOs do not have a unified approach to localization, externalization needs more attention and there is a lot to say. If we focus on responsibility-sharing, we can still bring in concepts of inclusion and a whole-of-society approach as a solution.

ICVA
- To advance on the thinking, we can imagine the details of a panel on localization and inclusion as we received some concrete suggestions, e.g. Act for Peace mentioned their recent paper with a section on localization in relation to the Rohingya in the refugee context of refugees. We also got input from CARE that they could present their Women Lead in Emergencies program with a focus on the refugee context in Uganda. However, on externalization, we have the arguments discussed but we have not received an indication of the panel directions/composition.
- To reach a decision, can we ask those in favor of externalization and share thinking about how you would see the panel and what kind of presentations and NGOs you would see contributing?

Act for Peace
- Having an academic talking about externalization would be an option, talking about responsibility shifting from a speaker providing evidence based.
- The entire panel on externalization should not be only focused on the global north and its containment policies and externalization policies. Pushbacks are in place throughout the world, and we would like to see for example the Rohingya context in the Andaman Sea, the push backs by multiple States and responsibility shifting taking place there and the way that civil society
actors and refugees are stepping up to fill the gaps left by lack of State leadership and State cooperation. So, not only talking only about Australia and the EU but be global in our approach.

**Women’s Refugee Commission**

- Agree with Act for Peace and if we can bring in someone who has done the research and can speak to externalization, and it does not have to be an academic *per se* it could also be an NGO that has done research on the issue.
- I think also it will be powerful if we can get refugees or asylum seekers speakers to speak to the impacts of pushbacks and of containment policies. For example, Behrouz Boochani wrote a book on his phone from Manus Island. Then, an NGO who has worked on the Mediterranean or the Libyan coast.

**Act for Peace**

- In Latin America, there is a strong concept of solidarity and States cooperation. If that is the case and if there are examples of good responsibility-sharing, it might be worthwhile to showcase it.

**Any suggestions from NGOs?**

**Refugee International**

- The often-used example of responsibility-sharing in Latin America is Colombia. The Colombian government recently established a rolling regularization system for all Venezuelans with a 10-year status. Ecuador also recently announced a new regularization scheme and we are working on a report on this.
- What is often mentioned in the Latin American context is also the establishment of the joint UNHCR-IOM Envoy, the inter-agency platform and the lead of the humanitarian response to displacement in the region. This created a structure that has fostered greater – if not coordination and standardization amongst the host countries – way for States to take more concrete steps towards realizing solidarity.
- We will also publish a report on the Cartagena Declaration that was adopted by most of South American countries and has a much broader definition of refugees, under which Venezuelans for example fit. The issue is that not all countries use the Cartagena Declaration to make refugee status determinations.

**ICVA**

- The side event is an opportunity to demonstrate NGOs products or to showcase NGO activities, e.g. looking at the RI reports could be an option. We also received suggestions from the Refugee Council of Australia by e-mail.
- The ideas provided bring more clarity now, a panel on externalization could include three panelists, for example: One NGO with a positive example from Latin America, one NGO involved in rescue at sea and how the NGO see the impacts of those policies on the ground and a Refugee Led Organizations/initiatives to showcase impacts on the ground.
- There is **more interest on externalization** including a shift in vote from Act for Peace that would bring 8 votes for externalization and 5 votes for localization and inclusion.
- ICVA will reframe the concept based on today’s inputs and contact some of you in the upcoming weeks to see how we can work together in terms of co-designing the panel in a light manner. **At the end of August, we will come with a concept and options.**
2. **Debriefing of UNHCR 81st Standing Committee (July) and information-sharing related to the upcoming 82nd Standing Committee (September) and 72nd Executive Committee (October)**

- **July Standing Committee was very much focused on:**
  - The COVID-19 pandemic impacts on displaced population. Access to vaccines is a big challenge in particular in terms of equity and the very small distribution of vaccines to low-income countries and middle-income countries. It was acknowledged that reaching out to communities would be extremely difficult and will be a major challenge in some countries.
  - Access to durable solutions was also strongly emphasized and the need to continue to get back on track regarding resettlement programs and complementary pathways. Not surprisingly and as in each Standing Committee, several States also called to restart voluntary repatriation.
  - On internal displacement, no update or new elements were highlighted. UNHCR presentation was very much focused on UNHCR emergency preparedness tool for Internally Displaced Persons and their last policy, on the role of UNHCR in coordination and within IASC, on data improvement as a priority and the commitment to follow-up on the upcoming recommendations from the HLP with other stakeholders and in particular affected States. Several States made references to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement with the mention of their support to the Panel and the upcoming recommendations, not surprisingly the EU, Canada, Norway, UK but also Armenia.
  - On statelessness, States mainly reported on their progress to reduce statelessness notably in terms of policy, e.g. in adopting national action plans and strategies, reforms to prevent statelessness including removal of gender discrimination from their nationality law or safeguards against statelessness at birth. Some States also reinforced requests for UNHCR to prioritize greater resources for statelessness activities.
  - On the ExCom Conclusion. We heard that ExCom meetings on the conclusions were ongoing. States mentioned the values of the ExCom Conclusion process and the outcome of agreed upcoming conclusions that contribute to the international refugee protection regime. Canada made a point on the importance of the refugees' voice in multilateral conferences.
  - Finally, there was a lack of attention on the Global Compact on Refugees/Global Refugee Forum implementation and follow-up that might be linked with the fact that there was a virtual consultation planned the day after of the Standing Committee (8 June). It may also not be the priority for several States or they have not so much to add beyond their updates on pledges through the Dashboard.

- **On UNHCR comments to the 3 NGO statements, thank you again to the NGO lead drafters and for the NGO inputs received.** On international protection and statelessness, UNHCR Director of the Division on International Protection responded by mentioning appreciation and recognizing UNHCR and NGOs clearly shared views, concerns, and priorities.

- **On the HLOM NGO statement, we will share notes soon in an e-mail to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)/Global Refugee Forum (GRF) mailing list [since the meeting, the notes were shared].** There were only two interventions from NGOs and the U.S. under this agenda item.

- **On the alignment of the priorities suggested in the NGO statement, UNHCR agreed this is important, and that the GCR objectives are the guiding principles. They answered that each roundtable will be directly aligned with the four original objectives of the GCR.**

- **They mentioned that they very much agree on the fact that inclusive participation is essential. UNHCR also mentioned that they have strategy for matching and will soon publish online a**
series of infographics on matching [since the meeting, UNHCR published the infographics by regions, see here].

- On the 3 Support Platforms side event, there was a technical issue for the persons in the room and we could not hear well. It was disappointing, and it seems that ideas and updates of those Support Platforms were very broad. It seems that the speakers were congratulating themselves on how successful those Platforms are but without explaining why and how they are successful.
- The Central African Republic called for support from the international community but without announcing the launch of a fourth Support Platform.
- The video recording of this side event is now available here.
- Welcome your feedback on the Standing Committee including information and understanding on the performance of the Support Platforms.

**82nd Standing Committee (September).** The call for the expression of interest was circulated by e-mail based on the agenda items defined by the Standing Committee programme and suggested three possible NGO statements on:

- **Oral update on ExCom Conclusions.** It will be an important NGO statement. It could be framed around the six topics or one of the topics of the Conclusion.
- **Oral update on the preparations for the High-Level Officials Meeting.** An important one too but will there be additional or different elements to add from the statement of July Standing Committee? Maybe around accountability, information sharing.
- **The Grand Bargain.**

- The expression of interest is open until 26 July. If your organization, yourself or one of your colleagues are interested to take the lead, please to contact us. Then it will be open to NGO inputs. [since the meeting, the first drafts were circulated with two NGO statements on ExCom Conclusions and The Grand Bargain.].
- There will be a call for expression of interest to draft NGO statements for UNHCR Executive Committee (October) [since the meeting, the call was circulated].
The suggested NGO statements are:

  - General debate,
  - International protection,
  - Programme budgets, management, financial control, and administrative oversight.

3. **The High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement**

- With this agenda item, we would like to debrief with you on the meeting organized on 19 July by InterAction with the High-Level Panel Secretariat, and exchange on NGOs interest and engagement related to the Panel ahead of and/or after the publication of the Panel’s report to the Secretary-General including the recommendations. We welcome your feedback.
- It was useful at this stage to receive the update note with more detailed indications of recommendations. In short, the main recommendations will focus on making progress on durable solutions and then invest in prevention, improve humanitarian response and there are few recommendations on the follow-up of the Panel’s report. There will probably not be a lack of consensus with the Panel’s report and recommendations or strong oppositions although some suggestions may not gather full support. For example: on funding, what we heard from the World Bank is that there are not keen on the idea to establish a Global Fund on Internal Displacement Solutions. We also heard lack of enthusiasm for this idea from some States. Another issue is also that some recommendations are relatively broad.
On NGOs’ possible collective engagement, one way is to follow-up on the Panel’s report and recommendations right after its publication. It could be a public letter to the UN Secretary-General highlighting the top key requests that should be put forward. There could be even additional NGO suggestions to make it happen. It could be also framed on what is missing from the report and recommendations, but this will take much more time to work on.

A question for NGOs, would you like ICVA to engage in the fall in the post-report phase to carry forward the recommendations?

Women’s Refugee Commission

- NGOs continuous engagement will be useful and there could be elements for NGOs to push on the recommendations. A conversation with donors is an idea.
- Some donors will be unhappy with the recommendations because this is not outside-of-the box.

ICVA

- We could ask to speak with George before the report is made public and have access to the report so we have this conversation around what should we do exactly and decide on few thematic or focus elements and the discussion could include InterAction.
- Suggestion from ICVA also some time ago of developing a paper on how the report should be implemented from the NGOs perspectives.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Center

- Not sure it would make sense to have a meeting with the Secretariat before the report will be public. It will be to the Secretary-General to do a follow-up of the report and see how it can be implemented.
- Instead, it would make more sense to show visibility from NGOs perspective in the form of a written statement or an event.

ICVA

- We could also imagine a meeting with Member States, with the group of friends.
- Follow-up action point for ICVA is to propose concrete ideas with what was mentioned and come back to you in September with a realistic work plan.

4. AoB

- A brief update on UNHCR-NGO Monthly Consultations on 28 July on LGBTIQ+ people in forced displacement. The Monthly Consultations will focus on the LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people and their protection and, to learn more about the outcomes and recommendations of a Global Roundtable that was organized recently by UNHCR and OHCHR on ‘Protection and Solutions for LGBTIQ+ People in Forced Displacement’. Another objective is to exchange about the current gaps, challenges, and opportunities to improve the protection of the LGBTIQ+. We will have speakers from HIAS, the Africa Human Rights Coalition, UNHCR. [The consultations have happened since the meeting].
- There will be a break in August with the Monthly Consultations, and it will start again in September, October, and November (no consultation in December). We have options of themes based on NGOs suggestions and we always welcome additional suggestions you may have.
- Few updates on upcoming meetings/events during the fall (September-October) 2021:
  - 1 Sept: UNHCR-WB Joint Data Center Strategic Advisory Council meeting
- 15-16 Sept: UNHCR Standing Committee
- Mid-Sept: UNHCR-NGO Consultations Europe (Dates TBC). Unfortunately, we are not able to provide further information at this stage. Hope at least a save the date will be sent soon.
- 29 Sept: UNHCR-NGO Monthly Consultations
- 4-8 Oct: UNHCR Executive Committee
- 20 Oct: ICVA will organize with UNHCR Partnership and Coordination Service an NGO GRF stocktaking event with UNHCR (Date TBC)
- 27 Oct: there is a GRF/HLOM virtual consultation organized by UNHCR

- **Contact us if you wish to have more information or suggestions on the above dates.**