



Forced Migration Working Group

Online

20 April 2021 (15:00-16:30)

Participants: Act Alliance, Asia Displacement Solutions Platform, Act for Peace, Danish Refugee Council, HIAS, International Committee of the Red Cross, Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan International, Refugees International, Secours Islamique France.

Agenda

1. **Discussion on the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement**
2. **Focus on the Nagorno-Karabakh situation and open advocacy letter from Refugees International**
3. **AoB**
 - Start the discussion on the 2021 ExCom NGO Side Event,
 - UNHCR 81st Standing Committee (5-7 July),
 - World Refugee Day.

ICVA

- On 19 April there was a first meeting to set-up a workstream on climate change and migration within the UN Network on Migration. A survey was put in place and will be shared. NGOs can complete it and look at synergies with ongoing work [*shared to NGOs since the meeting*].

1. Discussion on the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

- Debrief of the meeting ICVA organized on 25 March with NGOs and Panel Secretariat. Welcome 1) your thoughts on this meeting, 2) suggestions around what ICVA and NGOs collectively could do in the remaining few months of the Panel 3) share your own initiatives and work.
- It would be useful to discuss the “key shifts” and actions outlined. What was presented to us on 25 March was about: stronger prevention; strengthening leadership, accountability within the humanitarian system; making effective progress on Solutions linking to SDGs and changing the narrative; creation of a peer-to-peer learning mechanism, a global forum; IDPs representation bodies and enhancing community-based planning; leveraging financing e.g. through catalytic funding like multi-partner trust funds at country level or creating a new global fund; review of what IASC has been doing, the RC role, maybe updating policy guidance/the Guiding Principles.
- The meeting also raised the notion of enabling government ownership, political will and accountability; enabling a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach; follow up on EGRIS with regard to data; a focus on transitional justice and accountability for IDPs.
- Natural disasters and climate change were mentioned but it does not seem clear exactly where it fits and what are the proposals foreseen on this for the report to the Secretary General?
- **How groundbreaking and realistic/aspirational is all this? What do you think about “key shifts” and actions? Where do you think there are new elements and what can be taken forward? We welcome your suggestions.**

Act Alliance

- On one hand, it was good to have a comprehensive presentation covering different aspects.
- However, agree that one of the central ideas of the Panel’s work was to promote out-of-the box thinking on issues mentioned above and at the moment it is more about collecting the most



important ideas, already known to address internal displacement. Wonder whether they will use the next few months to develop some ideas and it was not clear what the process was.

- Wonder also if the Panel will cover all regions in the consultations with IDPs. They were opened to talking further but it did not seem to have a clear road map between now and September.
- There seems to be a lot of interest on how the Secretary General will decide to use the report and it is understandable that the Panel do not have an implementing mandate, but it would be good to at least think about a few options, e.g., the Group of States that were pushing for the Panel's creation, what does the Panel expect from them? Are there any concrete actions? The group of States could talk bilaterally to support other States in the process.
- It seems the thinking is still in construction including for the issue of climate change. There seems to be relatively little thinking too on how to use the report to plug it into other ongoing processes, e.g. the two Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration.

Plan International

- One disappointment is the lack of attention on the role of civil society and IDPs that seems lost in the Panel's process.
- Disappointment also around the potential recommendations, e.g. heading towards a more peer-to-peer approach is not innovative and was already being done by GP20.
- Secretariat is open to NGOs' suggestions, recommendations and we should seize the moment.
- The Plan International – World Vision [written submission](#) [*shared with NGOs ahead of the meeting*] on accountability and political will is looking at what will be the added value of a global space on those issues, complementing national and regional mechanisms. Thinking out-of-the box, what will be the added value to foster accountability and political will? Not to say that we should establish an accountable mechanism of the global level but looking at the primary role of States to be accountable for the IDPs' rights.
- The written submission idea came around November 2020. We organized several meetings with the Secretariat. Then, World Vision and Plan decided on a framework and had interviews with different key stakeholders both at the global and regional levels and tried to understand how this process should be done and what kind of recommendations could come out.
- Summarizing the three main recommendations of the submission: 1) Looking at a global forum, a global space including multi-stakeholders and IDPs to find solutions and ways forward.
- 2) The establishment of a Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSR) or an equivalent appointment. The idea is to have a specific structure within the UN system with political weight to advance on internal displacement.
- 3) To improve existing accountability mechanisms, e.g. the Human Rights Council, the voluntary national reviews for the SDGs, other treaty bodies review as well as to strengthen the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs and have a specific unit on IDPs.
- Acknowledge resources limitations and how much we can propose something ambitious, but the idea is to kick start the discussion and be pro-active with the Panel.
- The Secretariat sees a value in doing a workshop/roundtable between NGOs that can flesh out those recommendations and see how this could be taken forward. **NGO suggestions welcomed.**

ICVA

- We will discuss further how ICVA can support a roundtable in a small group ideally. If the notion of a global space finds its way in the report, a roundtable will certainly help provide content.
- On the way forward, George and Giovanni mentioned the need to maintain communication.



- Bearing in mind our limited resources, one issue is the consultation with IDPs, where we had a role at the beginning when convening meetings (see more information on ICVA's work [here](#)). Are there still gaps and needs? How do you suggest we engage in the coming months?
- Is the written submission still open for sign-on? [*closed since this meeting*]
- On behalf of Women's Refugee Commission, inform that there will be an age, gender, and diversity (AGD) and internal displacement second dialogue. It will take place at the end of May or early June. Women's Refugee Commission, Plan International, Save the Children, and Canada organized – and supported by Oxfam, IDMC as well – a dialogue focused on AGD and internal displacement in November 2020 with the aim of identifying concrete recommendations for the Panel and ensuring the rights of different groups of IDPs are respected and their needs met.
- Will there be an outcome document of the first dialogue?

Plan International

- We get few signs on the written submission and last-minute signs-on could be welcomed. A follow-up on the written submission and working on the recommendations through a round table will be important.
- **Welcome NGO interest in taking part in the second AGD Dialogue.** It will be an opportunity to ensure that several recommendations of the report are AGD sensitive.
- The outcome document of the first AGD Dialogue is still being compiled. We had a discussion with the Secretariat about the findings and the need to work on layouts aspects.

ICVA

- The Panel is in the phase of refining the recommendations until May/June and will then test the recommendations so the opportunity and the time window are relatively short, and we need to see what NGOs can realistically do. ICVA can provide some support.
- Flag again that one element of follow-up from the meeting of 25 March is after September, there is a need to reflect about what happens after the Panel's report. We would imagine the report will be public but that if it is not, an option would be to advocate for it to be public. Then, it may be **useful for NGOs to find ways of raising attention to some of the proposals.**
- An idea is the NGO ExCom side event, early October, that could be around internal displacement and what happens next in terms of the High-Level Panel suggestions from NGOs.
- Flag ICVA will organize a meeting for our members and the World Bank under IDA18, 19 & 20, their perspectives on the high-level officials meeting discussion. It will be probably on 12 May. We will provide more information ASAP [*shared to NGOs since this meeting*].
- The World Bank is also developing, and for some time now, its own approach to IDPs, so if NGOs think this could be a useful addition, we could try to set up a meeting between NGOs and the World Bank to learn a bit more what is in the pipeline on their IDPs policy.

2. Focus on the Nagorno-Karabakh situation and open advocacy letter from Refugees International

Refugees International

- Last year, there was a resumption of conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region between Armenia and Azerbaijan. At the time Crisis Action mobilized and convened meetings with NGOs to discuss the situation and to consider joint advocacy initiatives. The ceasefire was signed in October 2020, Crisis Action stepped back and encouraged NGOs concerned about humanitarian impacts of the conflict to continue exploring the need for joint advocacy effort.



- Refugees International together with Crisis Action and the International Federation for Human Rights drafted a letter to draw attention to the displacements resulting from the conflict and the ongoing humanitarian needs in the region. The primary challenge is the need to access areas affected by the conflict to which the UN and NGOs cannot currently go.
- Back in December we circulated a draft letter. We had good feedback and suggestions for inputs, unfortunately, the timing was not ideal and the attention on the issue was being trumped by the US elections and the holidays. We also had a discussion with the UNHCR Regional Europe Bureau about the situation and the sense was that it was a too sensitive given that the UN was negotiating access to affected areas for humanitarian workers. There was some concern that any very visible push given might undermine efforts to negotiate access and aid delivery. So, decision was taken to wait and see how things would develop, if there was a better time to publish the letter in 2021.
- It is still a very sensitive and complicated situation but there are concrete aspects to focus on advocacy efforts. One is UNHCR's role in facilitating returns of people displaced in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. This role mandating UNHCR was explicitly stated in the ceasefire agreement, but they do not have access.
- Another concrete focus is the release of an interagency response plan for Armenia with assessed financing requirements. It is a concrete effort to mobilize the international community.
- In Azerbaijan, the response is coordinated by the country team there and the only organization that has access is ICRC. Access is critical to assess the needs of affected populations.
- The open letter [*shared with NGOs ahead of the meeting*] tries to be as objective as possible and is careful about the language used. It outlines the situation on the ground in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh, outlining what the greatest needs are, what response is in place, gaps and how the international community needs to step up funding for the response.
- Rather than targeted recommendations to individual actors which could be misperceived. It is more a general call for expanding access for the UN and civil society and allowing for a more rigorous response informed by assessments that need to be done on the ground.
- **Welcome inputs** to the letter in particular from NGOs on the ground. We will then include inputs and recirculate the version for sign-on.

ICVA

- ICVA will flag again the open letter by e-mail [*done*].
- Once sign-on process is open. Are there some advocacy plans and potential collective actions to share broadly with the letter?

Refugees International

- On advocacy plans and potential collective action, it will depend on who signs-on and what support we have.
- At the last UNHCR Standing Committee, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the U.S. – which showed interest in the situation – took the floor on the issue. Surprisingly, Russia did not speak. A dissemination strategy that will include States and the EU will be important. Refugees International can lead more on the U.S. front. **On the EU front, support is welcome from other NGOs.**

ICVA

- **UNHCR-NGOs in Europe upcoming dialogue/meetings.** A series of meetings were organized by ECRE, UNHCR Europe and ICVA in 2020, with a focus on current operations in Europe.



- Those meetings aim to exchange in a safe space on common operations and key priorities. This will continue this year, e.g. there was a February meeting on pushbacks in Europe and the important role of the national independent monitoring mechanisms envisioned in the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration.
- There is the idea to have an upcoming meeting with NGOs to follow-up on the global discussions held in the context of the 80th Standing Committee, sharing critical operational updates and identifying the potential for common and joint advocacy.
- The agenda has to be confirmed but UNHCR Europe Bureau will certainly provide a situation overview, key hotspots and the main challenges to be addressed jointly by UNHCR and NGOs (e.g., around externalization, pushbacks and other key concerns). Then, a discussion will follow between UNHCR and NGOs. NGOs' interventions from the floor are very much welcome. If interested, please let us know and we will flag to UNHCR.
- We flagged to UNHCR Europe Bureau and ECRE that a priority for NGOs is access to territory and asylum in Europe as well as the restrictions taken to stop COVID-19 and its consequences on asylum; the EU Pact; on the operations: the Nagorno-Karabakh situation is a key priority for several NGOs, as well as Ukraine and the situation of IDPs.

3. AoB

UNHCR 81st Standing Committee (5-7 July).

- We do not know yet the format of this Standing Committee (hybrid, virtual, in person) and we will keep you updated once we have the information.
- There could be several agenda items and NGO statements but for ICVA it is not possible to coordinate too many statements. We made the following selection:
 1. Note on international protection (including solutions). Historically, an important one. There could be some repetitions from some elements of the NGO statement on “International protection and durable solutions in the context of a public health emergency” of March Standing Committee. New elements can be raised since March, e.g., Myanmar coup; Lake Chad; Protection issues related to climate change.
 2. Statelessness. An important issue and it is not common to have a specific topic on this.
 3. UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons.
 4. Oral update on the preparations for the high-level officials meeting (GRF). Important to convey NGO perspectives ahead of December officials meeting.
- The expression of interest will be sent by ICVA today or tomorrow [*Done*].

Start the discussion on the 2021 ExCom NGO Side Event.

- ExCom will be from 4 to 8 October 2021.
- ICVA has the role to organize each year a side event with NGOs to provide your perspectives on issues related to the Standing Committee and UNHCR work. Important to start early and keep time for exchanges, usually there is one hour for the event with a discussion with participants, i.e., Member States and UNHCR staff.
- The intention is to spark your thinking on themes that would be useful and impactful. One idea is the work on the High-Level Panel, we can focus on a region, a situation, on a specific protection dimension.
- What is always important is to bring the NGO perspective to showcase what you are doing and use it as an advocacy platform.



- We need to have an idea of the theme during the summer and then everything wrapped up around September.
- Welcome suggestions during a Forced Migration Working Group or by e-mail.
- Last year, the side event was on: [Resilient communities in climate-induced displacement](#) and the [summary](#) is also accessible.

World Refugee Day (WRD).

- On behalf of Women’s Refugee Commission, **welcome suggestions** on possible NGO collective action ahead of the WRD and given the 70th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention. We will share additional information from Manisha by e-mail [*Done*].
- The theme of the WRD this year is “The power of inclusion”. For your information, UNHCR-NGO Monthly Consultation of 26 April will include a brief on the WRD. UNHCR will also update regularly the WRD tool accessible to NGOs [here](#).