Forced Migration Working Group
Online
21 July 2020 (11:00-12:30)


Agenda
1. Standing and Executive Committees
2. UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations in 2020
3. AoB including feedback from UNHCR Bureau of Europe and ways forward

1. Standing and Executive Committees
- Feedback on the July 79th Standing Committee. We will be adding the detailed versions on Protection and Resettlement and complementary pathways. The detailed version of the NGO statement on UNHCR Budgets and Planning is available already.
- Did not learn a lot during the 79th Committee.
- On Solutions, there was no discussion on local integration or local solutions, which seemed to be replaced by an agenda item on resilience.
- On budgets and funding. UNHCR response was lengthy. Ritu Shroff directly responded to one aspect raised in the NGO statement, i.e. UNHCR budget channeled through implementing partners was close to 1.4 billion last year. In 2020 so far, UNHCR has distributed 700 million to NGOs. She also said the exact breakdown of UNHCR budget channeled through implementing partners between international and local NGOs could be shared later with NGOs.
- Internal displacement. Two focus since the beginning of pandemic, first, cash expansion has been critical over the past three months. UNHCR is implementing cash in 13 IDP operations.
- The second important focus since COVID-19 situation is visibility and advocacy and the impact of internal displacement on affected populations, including stepping-up on their interagency coordination leadership commitments.
- Few elements on the High-Level Panel were mentioned but not directly related to UNHCR.
- On the Conclusions’ process, the ExCom Rapporteur was Kenya this year. Seems to go in the direction that there will be no ExCom conclusion this year. There was the idea to develop a conclusion related to the pandemic, similar to the HC Dialogue on Protection Challenges but apparently some States said it is too early to discuss.
- Switzerland will be the Chair of the ATCR next year. Will be interesting to see what their priorities for the year will be.
- Next Standing Committee is on 16-17 September and NGO statements will be prepared.
- The Standing Committee work programme for 2020 is available here.
- We propose to coordinate four statements on the following agenda items:
  1. Update on 2020 funding. Not frequent to have an NGO statement on the topic but if there is an appetite and thinking that it is necessary and could follow-up the NGO statement in July, we can propose it and which may be linked with the agenda item 3 in one unique statement.
  2. Emergency preparedness and response.
  3. Update one the Grand Bargain. There used to be an NGO statement on it. There was an annual meeting recently on the Grand Bargain so there might be element to draft an NGO statement.
4. Integrity in UNHCR including, efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. There was a statement last year on it.
   - As usual, we do not take a decision now. NGOs can give their views, so we propose accordingly. We suggested the four themes below and then we can have only one theme because NGO take forward for only one statement for instance.
   - On the timeline, this week or next week we will send the expressions of interest. Around 7-10 August, NGO lead drafters share with ICVA first drafts of the statements. Around 10-18 August, ICVA circulates the draft statements and NGOs provide first round of inputs.

ACT Alliance
- All themes are relevant, might be able to contribute to the Grand Bargain theme.

CARE
- IRC shared with CARE that the Netherlands suggested to NGOs during the 79th Standing Committee that some donors States could have a briefing with NGO prior to UNHCR Standing Committee, so they will be better prepared and ask relevant questions to UNHCR during the Committee. We can follow-up on the discussion with IRC.

ICVA
- ICVA could provide support for organizing a donor briefing between NGOs and States, depending of the objectives and the workload of such meeting. Our perspective should be that it should be inclusive, and we should make sure not only ICVA members are invited but also NGOs broadly because the NGO statements are open broadly to NGOs. Preferably, it would also include non-Geneva-based NGOs although, again, the concept would matter (e.g. this may require small committee meeting).
- It could also be organized by ICVA but also by a collective of NGOs, it is up to NGOs decision.
- This could be a good way to convey messages from NGOs that could feed into States interventions, learn more about their positioning and intention and what they know from UNHCR.
- Be clear that such a meeting would not have any influence on NGO statements, as there would probably not be enough time to modify statements and share with the NGO community for validations.
- The formula could be to look at some of the agenda themes of the Committee.

- The NGO ExCom side event during the next Executive Committee from 5 to 9 October. We would like to continue brainstorming on the topic and who would be interested in developing the side event.
- Discussion with ExCom Secretariat, not sure if there will be one side event yet. If we are told it is not possible due to the pandemic, we could always do our own side event virtually.
- It is an NGO event; NGO provide their perspectives to States and UNHCR.
- Few parameters to help us select work on the basis of what is existing. We do not ask panelists to produce new research and anything new. It is based on what NGOs are doing already. Other parameter is making a link with what is the most important focus of the time.
- Suggestions by Danish Refugee Council on the idea of working on a session on frankness and debate, talking about gaps, issues, and problems rather than focused on “successes”.
- This idea could be developed or combined with another theme.
- Islamic Relief Worldwide also proposed the idea of a regional focus with a panel discussion on Syria conflict and crisis. What we are not saying about the conflict or what we should say.
- Internally displaced persons could be a topic possibly related to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement.
• Climate change, environmental degradation, and forced displacement (thereafter climate change) could be a topic also. Maybe link with UNHCR’s new Strategic Framework on Climate Action.

Islamic Relief Worldwide
• Suggested the theme following the Syria Conference but wondering if it is viable given the situation in Lebanon, UNHCR situation in Lebanon, etc. Maybe it will be too difficult to get concrete elements.
• Having conversation around frankness is a good idea.

ACT Alliance
• Agree that Syria is difficult to discuss in a public setting. We can think about it in broader terms around gaps, issues, problems. On all the issues on how to access to asylum in the current situation. We had a discussion with Islamic Relief Worldwide and UNHCR and think more strategically on how we can tackle the challenges rather than celebrate successes.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Center
• Do we know already the ExCom agenda? Might be useful to line up the NGO side event with the agenda.

ICVA
• We do not know the agenda yet, but we can expect a focus on the pandemic. The format is similar each year. The specific focus is on whether there is a high-level segment or a special event at the beginning. After the special event, there is the general debate with interventions from States that might address the topic of the high-level segment, plus what they want to say. Then there are protection and program agenda items and procedural themes such as election of ExCom members etc. and the report on the annual consultations.
• Other options can include a topic related to NGO response to the COVID-19 pandemic, maybe with a link to the HC’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges which focuses on 1. Protection considerations; 2. Resilience and inclusion during emergencies and long-term; 3. Lessons learned from the pandemic to inform climate actions.

Islamic Relief Worldwide
• Climate change theme is not enough on the policy agenda and is a good one. It is distressing regarding the urgency of the theme.

ICVA
• Agree and at the same time, in the context of the Panel, there is a focus on climate change, PDD is also pushing in that sense.
• The Special Rapporteur on IDPs also will present a report on the topic in September at the UN General Assembly and there is the UNHCR’s new Strategic Framework on Climate Action. Last year the HC started his push on climate change during his opening statement and he announced Andrew Harper’s new role too. So, the theme is not completely aside.

ACT Alliance
• Climate change should be on the agenda.

CARE
• CARE kept the climate change theme high on its agenda even at the beginning of the pandemic.

Notes for ICVA members only – not to be circulated
• See for instance the recent Executive Summary from CARE on *Evicted by Climate Change: Confronting the Gendered Impacts of Climate-Induced Displacement*.

**APRRN**  
• UNHCR Bureau in Asia is moving to the climate space after direction from Geneva.

**ICVA**  
• To summarize there is interest from NGOs on three dimensions, one is the idea raised by DRC around frankness and it can be used an adapted to a specific topic. Secondly, the idea around COVID-19 response or climate change.

**Plan International**  
• Relevant to have the discussion around NGO actions and frankness, it can be easily combined. Time changing landscape for NGOs with the civil society space closing, the pandemic, the future difficulty of NGOs funding. We can talk about our struggles.

**Oxfam**  
• It could be a topic around refugee meaningful participation or refugee meaningful participation can be inserted in the topic decided.  
• Build on the GRF, GRLN asked a refugee observer status to ExCom. It is something that States have to propose, a number of States show an interest, but it would be a good moment to push for that. Is there interest in such topic from others?  
• Can share RLO contacts.

**Refugee Council for Australia**  
• Agree with Oxfam idea.

**Plan International**  
• Refugee meaningful participation could be merged with one topic.

**ICVA**  
• Refugee meaningful participation can be merged with the idea around frankness and COVID-19. Although might be more difficult with a topic on climate change.  
• On the topic status, the idea of having an observer status is probably a long shot in the sense that there would be a need to have a full revision of the ExCom rules of procedure. Meaning reopening the process of Member States negotiations which is complicated and long. Not convinced UNHCR would go in that direction, not that they would be against having refugee observer status but more fear on what would happen in such negotiations among States.

**Islamic Relief Worldwide**  
• It is not the same thing as the specific GRLN advocacy ask but in terms of whether online or not, do we push for refugee participation on the panel of the side event or at the very least consider how we get NGO from outside Geneva on the panel?

**ICVA**  
• On the format, it is short, one hour. The best is usually is to have three panelists and at least one small NGO. We have funding, which can be used to support travel of one small NGO and in exceptional cases, one RLO. We should not have more than four panelists otherwise there will be no time for questions from the floor. So if we go for an RLO, just be conscious that this means one less NGO on the panel. We would not have a full RLO panel.
• If you have formulation and ideas in mind, send us suggestions, it can push the theme in one direction.

2. **UNHCR-NGO weekly meetings and UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations in 2020**
   • On the weekly consultations, tomorrow’s theme is **Communicating and Fundraising**. On 29 July the theme is Mental health and psychosocial support in the context of COVID-19.
   • There will be a pause until September with one meeting that month. Next meeting is in principle on 9 September on inclusion of persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 response.
   • The reason why there is one meeting is that there should be the annual consultations by the end of September.
   • After September, there will be meetings every two weeks. Provisional indicative dates:
     - 14 October, Durable solutions and COVID-19.
     - 28 October, COVID-19 long-term impacts on protection and how to address them.
     - 11 November, Statelessness and COVID-19 response.
     - 25 November, SGBV and Age, Gender and Diversity sensitive COVID-19 response
   • Next year, not yet determined how it will continue and the frequency of the meetings between UNHCR and NGO. Having a series of exchanges with NGOs is interesting, beyond COVID-19 and in addressing more focused topics. Will keep you informed.

**Islamic Relief Worldwide**
• Weekly meetings are not enough interactive and too many speakers that speak for too long.

**ICVA**
• The June **UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations** was replaced by the idea to have consultations at the end of September, tentatively 29 and 30 September, one day and a half, virtual.
• No confirmation from UNHCR yet on the dates and on the concept note.
• A consultation directly connected with the HC’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges theme “Protection during pandemics”.
• The consultations are trying to address the same broad themes of the HC’s Dialogue aiming at complementarity. The annual consultations will be focused on protection considerations with a focus on access to territory and basic services which is not something that will be focused during the HC Dialogue. Resilience and inclusion, the HC Dialogue will be much more focused on health. The annual consultation will focus more on the socio-economic impact. Partnership agreements in pandemics will be one focus on the consultations and with discussion and how the pandemic can inform UNHCR reform and UNHCR-NGO partnership.
• More difficult to have a co-design UNHCR-NGO event this year due to the tight deadline, difficulty to get agreement from UNHCR every step of the way, etc.

**Refugee Council of Australia**
• What time of the day is the annual consultations?

**ICVA**
• In principle, as foreseen (but likely to evolve): Starting on 29 September at midday until 17:30 (GVA time) and on 30 September it is all day until 16:00. Not ideal for Asia and the Americas. That is the big challenge for a global online consultation. Not everyone will be able to follow all the consultations, but it is accessible to a majority when starting in the midday, even if not ideal.
• Send us your interest, suggestions, reactions so we could convey to UNHCR and ensure the process is a bit more inclusive than it is now.
• In doing so, there should not be the usual workload, around the conceptualization of the sessions. It would be around agreeing on panelists, on the methodology of the panel.
• Workload might happen after the consultation around doing a short summary of the session and a short follow-up if needed.
• The session on climate action might be a bit more difficult to work on because UNHCR’ Framework on Climate Action is not yet out.

Plan International
• Will consult internally and get back to you.

Refugee Council of Australia
• Will get back to you with suggestion for NGO Consultations session on Protection Considerations, of NGOs and refugee-led networks working together in Australia to respond to COVID-19 with a mixture of actions: campaigning on concerns about destitution, practical assistance, community education on COVID-19 risk.

3. AoB
• Feedback from UNHCR Regional Bureau of Europe dialogue on 6 July with NGOs. UNHCR is keen to have regular discussions with NGOs. On 6 July limited discussion with NGOs with the idea of creating reference groups to move forward on concrete actions.
• The criteria to be invited were NGOs active in more than one country in Europe.
• Notes were shared with invited NGOs.
• If you were not in the meeting and have not receive the notes, let us know.
• Going forward, appetite from UNHCR and NGOs to find a way for concrete in dept discussion leading to join/common/coordinated actions, possibly on advocacy.
• For instance, having a discussion with NGOs on the recent legislative changes in Hungary due to the pandemic and how it impacts refugee protection. UNHCR would be willing to discuss with NGOs and know your activities and what to do jointly.
• Would you have an interest in joining a discussion on Hungary and suggestions?
• Two UNHCR related references, if you have not seen/read it already:
  o UNHCR Position on Hungarian Act LVIII of 2020 on the Transitional Rules and Epidemiological Preparedness related to the Cessation of the State of Danger, June 2020: https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ef5c0614.html
• If there is an NGO interest, engagement proposals from NGOs could be on already existing NGOs work: reports, press releases, etc. or new initiatives: open letters, virtual roundtable, bi-lateral meetings with parties concerned, etc.
• UNHCR mentioned to ICVA that they are available to answer any questions we may have. Possible question to raise to UNHCR to move forward and help NGOs to engage in such group could be what is UNHCR current priorities and whom they target? It is at the Political level, Media/Communication level, and/or Legal level. All of those levels?

World Vision
• Not able to join the EU call due to SP for SSAR high-level meeting, I would be interested to hear more and potentially support an EU focused working group. It will be further needed as the impact of COVID-19 becomes clearer.
**ACT Alliance**
- Happy to join discussions, several of our European members are active.

**Islamic Relief Worldwide**
- Would the reference group be only advocacy focused?
- During the dialogue on 6 July I asked about FBO organizations related to a reference group with the idea on how to do more FBO campaigns and ideas around welcoming the strangers.

**ICVA**
- Not necessarily only about advocacy but it is one aspect UNHCR seems interested in.
- Besides, NGO landscape in Europe is a bit less about humanitarian action on the ground (except for Greece and Italy) and a bit more about advocacy than in other contexts.
- They are open to suggestions.

**ICMC**
- ICMC is very involved in integration in Europe through it is SHARE programme and happy to discuss with IRW.

**ICVA**
- To summarize, expecting your suggestions by e-mail on UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations in Geneva, on UNHCR Bureau of Europe and on NGO ExCom side events.