



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

# CASE STUDY

**2023 Global Refugee Forum:  
ICVA Co-Convenes the  
Multi-Stakeholder Pledge on  
Advancing Localization in  
Displacement and  
Statelessness Responses**

**2024**

## Context

In 2018, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) was adopted to establish a framework for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing related to refugee situations among United Nations (UN) Member States and relevant stakeholders. The GCR aims to achieve this by 1) easing pressure on host countries; 2) enhancing refugee self-reliance; 3) expanding access to third country solutions; and 4) supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.<sup>1</sup>

To achieve these objectives, the GCR outlines various measures to mobilise collective action at global, regional, and country levels. The Global Refugee Forum (GRF) serves as the GCR's global international cooperation mechanism facilitating the practical implementation of its objectives. Convened every four years, the GRF brings together UN Member States and relevant stakeholders to announce specific pledges and contributions (financial, material, or technical assistance) in support of the GCR objectives. The forum also reviews the implementation of previous pledges, and explores opportunities, challenges and ways to enhance burden-and responsibility sharing.<sup>2</sup> The first GRF in 2019, organized by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), gathered around 3,000 participants including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN Member States, UN agencies, the private sector, and refugees. During the event, 1,400 pledges were made across various areas such as education, economic inclusion, protection, and durable solutions<sup>3</sup>. A Mid-Term Review was scheduled for 2021, and the second GRF was planned for 2023.

Since 2016, ICVA has actively participated in activities related to the GCR, both leading up to its adoption, and in subsequent years. ICVA's involvement in these efforts is exemplified by specific activities:

- **2019 Engagement:** Throughout 2019, ICVA played a supportive role in raising awareness and engaging NGOs in the implementation of the various elements of the GCR and the organization of the 2019 GRF. Notably, ICVA facilitated the coordination of collective NGO statements during preparatory meetings organized by UNHCR.
- **2020-2022 Follow-up:** From 2020 to 2022, ICVA continued its commitment to GCR-related work by actively participating in the follow-up to the GRF and the implementation of GCR objectives. This engagement was part of ICVA's own pledge to assist NGOs in the involvement with GCR implementation. The support provided by ICVA during this period included activities such as GRF analysis, mapping GRF implementation, and facilitating NGOs' participation in relevant meetings and global refugee mechanisms.
- **Localization and principled partnership:** Over recent years, particularly after key commitments made in 2016 through the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain, as well as the adoption of the GCR in 2018, there has been a notable shift towards localizing humanitarian action. The emphasis has been on implementing principled partnerships with local and national actors in humanitarian responses. Civil society organizations (CSOs), including international and national NGOs, faith-based organizations (FBOs), refugee-led organizations (RLOs), and entities led by stateless persons, have gained recognition for their crucial role in addressing displacement and statelessness. This recognition has underscored the value that these organizations bring to the humanitarian system. As a result, advancing the localization agenda in responses to displacement and

<sup>1</sup> See <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Global%20compact%20on%20refugees%20EN.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.unhcr.org/media/outcomes-global-refugee-forum-2019>

statelessness has become a growing priority for NGOs, UN Member States, UNHCR, and other humanitarian stakeholders.

- **GRF Multistakeholder Pledge on Advancing Localization:** The momentum for an ICVA and UNHCR jointly convened GRF evolved out of this context.

## What ICVA, UNHCR and NGOs did

The approach used to develop the pledge focused on ICVA and UNHCR facilitating activities in collaboration with key stakeholders, including national NGOs, FBOs and RLOs, to generate and promote a co-created multi-stakeholder pledge to advance the localization agenda in displacement and stateless responses.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, the [NGO Global Consultations](#) organized by UNHCR and ICVA had a focus *inter alia* on localization. The consultations supported the development of recommendations reflecting a collective understanding that while the localization principle was widely endorsed within the humanitarian system, concrete actions supporting collaboration with local and national actors, improving funding to local and national actors, and supporting the capacities of local and national actors in their displacement and statelessness response efforts were lagging. These significant barriers to localization in displacement and statelessness responses became the foundational elements for the pledge.

In March 2023, ICVA and UNHCR set up a Reference Group composed of 21 members<sup>5</sup> from NGOs, UN Member States, international organizations, and UN agencies to co-create and develop the pledge's vision and statement, objectives, and themes. The pledge is an enabling pledge, contributing to the implementation of all GCR objectives. It aims to “enhance the capacity and ownership of local and national actors, and to develop stronger and more equitable partnerships with them, fostering contextually relevant, efficient, effective and sustainable solutions that will improve the lives of refugees, other displaced and stateless persons”.

The pledge focuses on three commitment areas, namely 1) improving the safe, inclusive, meaningful, and equitable participation of local and national actors in decision-making; 2) enhancing capacity-sharing; and 3) significantly improving the accessibility, quality, quantity and tracking of funding to local and national actors. These commitments are structured around an overarching policy commitment to support the efforts of all relevant actors in collectively advancing locally led action in displacement and statelessness responses. Equitable partnerships further support the commitments as a cross-cutting component.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> From internal Joint Pledge Concept Note document.

<sup>5</sup> Reference Group members included Bondeko Refugee Livelihoods Centre, BRAC, the Government of Canada, the Danish Refugee Council, the Government of Denmark, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), HIAS, InterAction, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Government of Ireland, the Lotus Flower, the Lutheran World Federation, Oxfam, Nahda Makers Organisation, the National Congress of Ukrainians of Moldova, the Government of the Netherlands, the Government of Uganda, the Somalia NGO Consortium, the United Nations Children's Fund, Unite Stateless, and the Venezuelan Union in Peru.

<sup>6</sup> See [Multistakeholder Pledge on Advancing Localisation in Displacement and Stateless Responses](#)

Three Working Groups were subsequently set up in April 2023 to co-create concrete commitments from the pledge's themes that GRF stakeholders could use or get inspiration from to make individual commitments as part of the multi-stakeholder pledge. The work of the Working Groups and Reference Group was peer reviewed,<sup>7</sup> and resulted in eight (8) main commitments and 33 sample commitments across the commitment areas on policymaking, partnerships, decision-making, capacity-sharing and funding.<sup>8</sup>

Between May and November 2023, ICVA raised awareness on the GRF and the pledges through its [monthly bulletins](#), social media, mailing lists, NGO convenings, and members' briefings.<sup>9</sup>

The Global Refugee Forum was held between 13 – 15 December in Geneva, Switzerland. GRF related events took place in the lead up to and during the GRF.

On 14 December, a linked event<sup>10</sup> on “Navigating Localisation: The Imperative for Locally-led Action in Displacement and Statelessness Responses” was organized by ICVA and UNHCR to facilitate a whole-of-society discussion on central elements of localization, including partnerships, funding, capacity-sharing, and inclusion in decision-making, as a means to galvanise support for the pledge. The event was attended by 70 participants.



On 15 December, a high-level side event parallel to the GRF was convened on the pledge's commitments.<sup>11</sup> The event aimed to not only outline the pledge's objectives but also to highlight successful localization practices while fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration on fostering equitable partnerships. Attended by 200 participants, the event served to inform stakeholders on the tangible benefits of providing flexible and direct funding to local and national actors. Through panel discussions<sup>12</sup> featuring representatives from national and international NGOs, diverse approaches to localization implementation were shared, drawing on concrete examples. The event effectively demonstrated the progress achievable through localization initiatives.

*ICVA, the Government of the Netherlands, the Government of Uganda, and UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner at the parallel high-level side event*

<sup>7</sup> The work was reviewed by the Advisory Board to the UNHCR Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons, and UNHCR NGO Reference Group and other NGOs, and the Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Group of Friends.

<sup>8</sup> See [Multistakeholder Pledge on Advancing Localisation in Displacement and Stateless Responses](#)

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.icvanetwork.org/uploads/2023/06/ICVA-Bulletin-in-English-May-2023.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/global-compact-refugees/global-refugee-forum-2023/programme/linked-events>

<sup>11</sup> Jamie Munn, ICVA's Executive Director, moderated the session. A recording of the event will be made available on <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/global-compact-refugees/global-refugee-forum-2023/livestream-and-webcasts>

<sup>12</sup> The panellists were from Caritas Venezuela, SENED, BRAC, the Turkish Red Crescent, Oxfam, Women for Action, and the Amahoro Coalition.

Moreover, the event underscored the importance of involving organizations led by displaced and stateless people in humanitarian, development, and peace efforts. By emphasising self-reliance and local integration, diverse engagement strategies were showcased to enhance the efficacy of such initiatives.

## Results and impact

By 31 December 2023, the pledge had received 40 commitments from 38 stakeholders including 15 international NGOs, 9 States, 4 local or national actors, 4 UN agencies and 2 networks.<sup>13</sup> This placed the pledge among the top 30 multi-stakeholder pledges in terms of commitments received throughout 2023.<sup>14</sup> Approximately one in four commitments came from stakeholders closely engaged in the pledge development or advocacy, showing the significance of the co-creation process in supporting ownership of the pledge.<sup>15</sup>

Regarding the commitment areas targeted by the pledge, preliminary analysis indicates that the highest number of commitments focused on enhancing capacity-sharing. This was closely followed by commitments to improve the accessibility, quality, quantity, and tracking of funding, as well as improving safe, inclusive, meaningful, and equitable participation in decision-making processes. Examples of capacity-sharing commitments include initiatives to empower stateless individuals to navigate complex immigration systems. Financial commitments include endeavours such as establishing a globally recognised Pooled Fund<sup>16</sup> model to amplify funding for local and national actors. Decision-making commitments involve promoting a safe and enabling environment for local actors to contribute to policymaking.<sup>17</sup> It is hoped that the realization of these commitments will advance the Grand Bargain commitment to allocate at least 25% of humanitarian funding to local and national actors. Furthermore, they will also pave the way for principled and equitable partnerships, where the contributions of all actors are recognised and valued.

## Lessons learned

The submission data for pledges received to date indicates a high number of pledges made before the GRF. This demonstrates the importance of promoting the pledge ahead of the GRF. In a landscape where pledges are numerous and stakeholders' attention is being sought from all directions, early promotion is essential to ensure visibility and engagement.

The pre-pledge NGO Consultations that occurred and the collaborative co-creation development methodology employed, which involved a diverse group of stakeholders such as NGOs, FBOs, and RLOs, were instrumental in establishing the conditions for the pledge's thematic framework. By engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including those directly impacted by displacement and statelessness, these consultations ensured that the pledge's themes were authentically rooted in the needs of local and national actors. This inclusive approach has been pivotal in advancing localization within displacement and statelessness responses.

<sup>13</sup> See [Advancing Localisation in Displacement and Statelessness Responses pledge contributions](#)

<sup>14</sup> See <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/pledges-contributions>

<sup>15</sup> See [Advancing Localisation in Displacement and Statelessness Responses pledge contributions](#)

<sup>16</sup> Pooled Funds are effective ways to support humanitarian action. They allow governments and private donors to pool their contributions into common, unearmarked funds to deliver assistance to people in need.

<sup>17</sup> See [Advancing Localisation in Displacement and Statelessness Responses pledge contributions](#)



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