

**NGO Statement on Budgets and Funding – Oral Version**

Dear Chair, distinguished delegates,

This statement was drafted through consultation with a wide range of NGOs, including organisations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

We are faced with unprecedented numbers of forcibly displaced people and a record low level of resources.

The dramatic reductions in foreign aid budgets, particularly by the US, have devastated displaced and stateless communities – their basic needs, protection, dignity and agency. Tightening budgets are forcing prioritisation triage, while leaving seemingly ‘non-life saving’ activities unfunded. We are seeing a rapid backslide against previous protection gains made, with fatal consequences.

Moving forward, we will reflect on the system-wide reaction to the funding cuts. Decisions made now will have long-lasting impacts on the lives of people. Now is the time to act collectively and strategically..

We need to rethink not just **what** gets funded, but **who** decides, **how** decisions are made, and **whose voices** shape the priorities. The people whose lives are being directly impacted by these cuts, forcibly displaced and stateless persons, must be at the center of decision-making.

Dear Chair,

We welcome UNHCR’s steps towards operationalizing locally led action in refugee and statelessness responses and look forward to the roll-out of UNHCR’s guidelines on localization. As the system moves rapidly towards localization, it must be done right.

We have the following recommendations on how to shift power and achieve equitable partnerships to create true locally led action.

**First**, we urge UNHCR to continue fostering trust-based partnerships through further easing and simplifying administrative processes; prioritising building partnerships with refugee and stateless-led organisations, and local and national organisations; and brokering donor trust and legitimacy on behalf of refugee and stateless-led organisations, and local and national organisations at all levels.

By doing so, UNHCR can shift to a funding and programming model rooted in local legitimacy. This approach strengthens sustainability, bolsters community trust, and enhances accountability.

**Secondly**, we need to move, **together**, towards a **system** where there is a re-distribution of direct funding and decision-making power to systemically rely on refugee-led, stateless-led and local and national NGOs in direct implementation, coordination and decision-making forums.

Refugee-led, stateless-led and local and national NGOs often receive smaller earmarked grants, causing insufficient institutional funds, weakened local ownership, unsustainable initiatives, and hindered long-term community engagement.

This undermines localisation and reduces the resilience of local systems in the face of future challenges. Despite these and other political and social pressures, these organisations continue to be at the frontline alongside displaced communities, addressing important gaps in both daily and crisis responses.

We ask that further steps be taken to advance funding mechanisms to enable direct funding for meaningful and sustained local leadership to address displacement.

**Thirdly**, as the forced displacement response architecture is being reimagined and transformed, refugees and stateless persons must be included and recognised as leaders at the decision-making table.

We urge UNHCR to champion the leadership of refugee and stateless-led organisations in ongoing discussions regarding the reset – including on how to prioritise extremely limited global resources within and across country contexts. This is crucial for a true shift and we ask for mechanisms to be set up for this purpose

**Lastly, it is necessary to stress that increased financial efforts towards locally led action are *futile* without the necessary political work** to ensure protection and legal certainty for refugee-led, stateless-led and local and national NGOs. Having one without the other is not only ***counterproductive***, but also renders an efficient and effective local refugee response ***impossible***.

We stand ready to work with and support UNHCR and Member States in this important work.

This statement is available on [icvanetwork.org](https://icvanetwork.org).

Thank you.