



August 2018

POLICY DISCUSSION AND OUTCOMES PAPER

This paper outlines the discussions and key recommendations of the Global Summit of Refugees (the Summit), held in Geneva on 25-26 June 2018. The following provides:

1. Background information about the Summit and the methodology used in drafting this paper;
2. An overview of current policy debates and discussions at the Summit on five key themes: (1) Participation and agency; (2) Access to protection, rights and shelter; (3) Local integration and inclusion; (4) Durable solutions and movement; and (5) Root causes and system change;
3. A summary of key recommendations.

This paper provides an account of the discussions at this two-day gathering, and outlines recommendations for how the ideas leading up to and arising from the Summit can be taken forward. These discussions and recommendations are relevant to inform the strategic thinking and actions of refugee-led organisations and networks at different levels, and to other stakeholders wishing to support the agency and voice of refugees and other forcibly displaced people in policy and decision-making processes.

1. BACKGROUND

Global Summit of Refugees

On 25 and 26 June 2018, 72 refugee representatives from 27 host countries in Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Australia and New Zealand gathered at the Geneva Press Club for the first-ever Global Summit of Refugees. Building on their participation in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) consultations and negotiations, UNHCR's annual NGO consultations and regional and local advocacy, representatives of eight refugee-led networks, including the Network for Refugee Voices (NRV), the Australian National Committee of Refugee Women (ANCORW), Network for Colombian Victims for Peace in Latin America and the Caribbean (REVICPAZ-LAC, for its initials in Spanish), New Zealand National Refugee Association, Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, Refugee Led Organizations Network (Uganda) and Syrian Youth Volunteers – Netherlands convened and organised the Summit. Support was provided by two NGOs, Independent Diplomat and the Refugee Council of Australia. The Summit was a history-making event, bringing together representatives from forcibly displaced populations from all over the globe for the first time to discuss, plan and organise.

Methodology

The five key themes discussed at the Summit and in this paper were identified by the Summit Steering Committee, and were informed by priorities that participants identified in registering for the Summit. A policy discussion paper organised around these themes was drafted and circulated to participants prior to the Summit. This discussion paper drew from previous refugee consultations such as the International Refugee Congress, G-100, the GCR consultations, an online survey of Summit participants prior to the event and consultations held by REVICPAZ-LAC with hundreds of refugees in six Latin American countries between May and June 2018. The paper defined the scope of discussions, and provided a summary of policy

opportunities and challenges, as well as recommendations put forward previously by refugee-led organisations and networks.

During the Summit, participants were divided into five working groups, chaired by members of the Steering Committee, for further discussions in each of these theme areas. Each working group engaged in multiple discussions to share experiences and put forward recommendations. Note-takers assigned to each working group documented these discussions, and these have been incorporated into this paper. In addition, Steering Committee members worked after the Summit to synthesise discussions into overarching recommendations, which are included below.

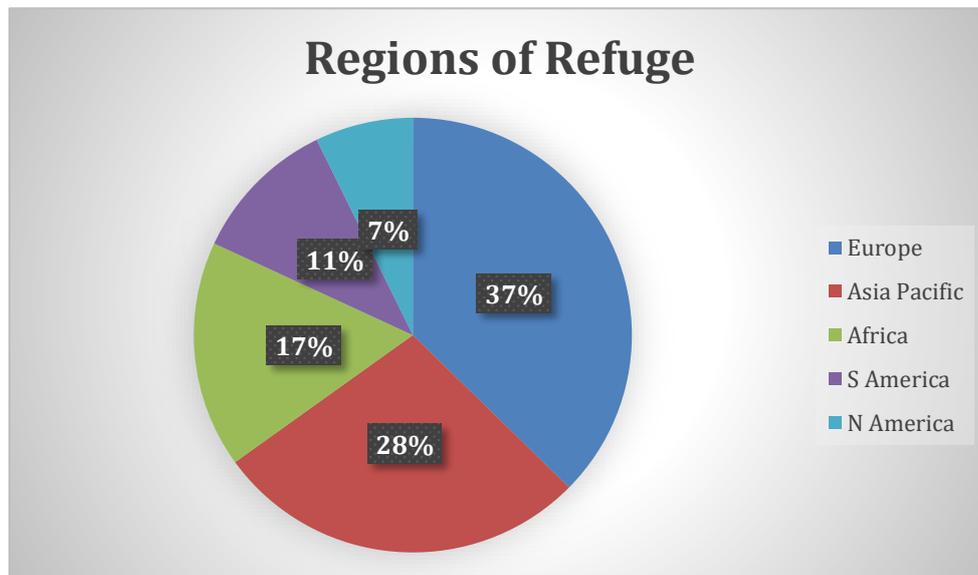
A note on terminology

At the Summit, participants discussed the problems created by categories and labels that exclude particular groups of forcibly displaced people who may not fit the 'refugee' definition or be able to seek international protection and can therefore be excluded from accessing services and supports or participating in discussions on refugee protection. We refer in this paper to 'refugees and others forcibly displaced' to include anyone who has been forced to flee and seek safety elsewhere, including those who may not be recognised as refugees by local authorities. Where, for the sake of brevity and readability, only the term 'refugee' is used (e.g. 'refugee-led organisation or network' or 'refugee voices') this should be taken to mean 'refugees and others forcibly displaced'.

Participation

The refugees involved in the Summit were based in 27 different countries of asylum distributed across five regions (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Regional distribution of refugees participating in the Global Summit of Refugees

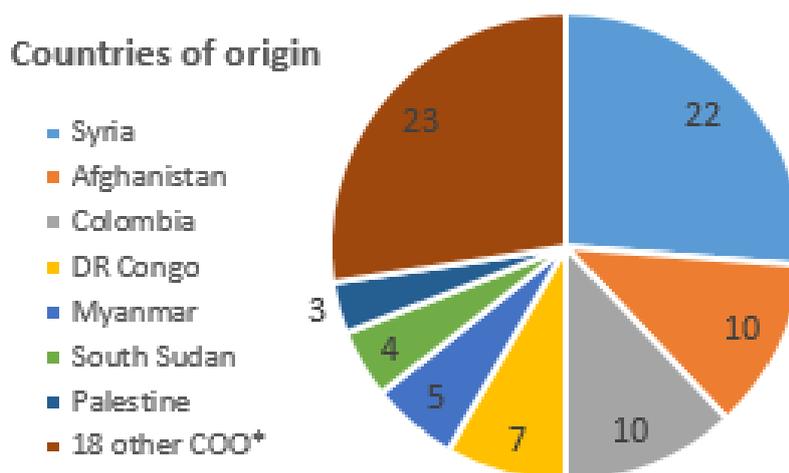


While there was gender parity and geographical distribution covered most regions satisfactorily, there were some representational disparities. The existence of platforms and experience in collaboration at the regional level in Asia-Pacific and Latin America underlined the need to consolidate regional dialogues and potentially platforms in other regions. Other challenges to representational diversity included: difficulties encountered in prospective participants obtaining visas to travel from certain countries, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, and from countries of asylum where there were concerns as to whether the hosting states would allow refugee representatives to re-enter. It was also apparent that situations where major humanitarian operations were deployed were underrepresented. This underrepresentation was evident by the absence at the Summit of refugees from countries that stifle and censor activity to promote refugee rights, such as Egypt and Hungary. While more could have been done to ensure the representation of

refugee-led initiatives in emergency and protracted humanitarian contexts at the Summit, their absence was also a reminder of the disconnection and challenges faced by local and refugee-led initiatives in contexts of large and protracted humanitarian responses.

The refugees involved in the summit came from 25 different countries of origin, with representatives from all the major countries where refugees flee (see Figure 2). Invitations to the Summit were issued to a representative group of 100 refugee leaders, nominated by the Summit steering committee. This group then shared the invitation with their communities. Many participants registered for the Summit after hearing about the Summit through word of mouth.

Figure 2. Countries of origin of refugees participating in the Global Summit of Refugees



Participants were screened through a due diligence process to ensure that they were refugees or in refugee-like situations, that they were active leaders in their communities and that they were involved in their own initiatives to address refugee policy either by leading an NGO, social enterprise, or business or through individual advocacy. Together these organisations represent the vitality of this emerging refugee civil society. Through their innovative initiatives and engagement, they have highlighted that refugees are not mere passive recipients of aid but active contributors to their society.

Support

Independent Diplomat and the Refugee Council of Australia provided logistical and secretarial support to the Summit. The Summit was made possible through the generous funding contribution of Oxfam, UNHCR and the European Commission, the Open Society Foundation, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Dutch Refugee Council, and Refuge Point. Other also agencies contributed by sponsoring refugees to participate in particular European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), and the Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Summit on Refugees was the first ever international gathering of refugee by refugees. The sense of empowerment resulting from it was palpable to all the participants. The Summit provided an opportunity for refugee leaders to network and exchange ideas.

Through the thematic discussions the participants were able to bring forth the issues that mattered to them and make three key recommendations:

1. An inclusive international platform for refugee participation and self-representation must be established, made up of a **representative network of refugee community organisations, initiatives and change-makers** from around the world.

2. Refugee-led organisations and networks must be **guaranteed a seat at the negotiation table at all levels** (local, state, regional and international) to raise the concerns of affected populations in policy and decision-making fora relating to forced displacement, including at: the Global Refugee Forum and UNHCR Executive Committee meetings.
3. All actors involved in international protection must consider and actively work towards the meaningful **inclusion and enablement of refugee-led organisations and initiatives as equal partners** in the pursuit of solutions to forced displacement. This includes considerations about allocation of resources, ways to support leadership and capacity building requests made by refugee-led organisations and networks, and analysing and addressing barriers to participation.

Additional recommendations, developed in the lead-up to the Summit and supported by Summit discussions, include: improving refugees' access to basic services; enhancing access to education for refugees and host communities; training and employing refugees to run camps and lead community programs; addressing key barriers to refugees' participation in decision-making processes; allocating funding to strengthen refugee-led organisational structures; supporting the development of refugee-led media initiatives; creating space for rethinking durable solutions; and increasing access to resettlement and alternative migration pathways.

3. THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

The following summaries of the Summit's thematic discussions include: clarification on the scope of the theme; the policy opportunities and challenges pertinent to refugee-led organisations and networks (both those identified in the policy discussion paper drafted prior to the Summit, as well as ideas or clarifications that came through discussions during the Summit); and a summary of the Summit working group discussion on this theme.

3.1 Participation and agency

Participation and agency refers to the way in which refugees and others forcibly displaced can participate meaningfully and exert influence in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Participation and agency can be used to describe different situations, from a person being able to make informed decisions and fully participate in a local labour market, through to groups of refugees being able to access democratic institutions and political processes (e.g. being able to elect representatives or vote). In the context of the Summit, the focus of discussions was on how refugees and others forcibly displaced can participate (act) and have agency (influence) in decision-making processes at different levels (local, national, regional, global) and in different kinds of spaces (e.g. government, NGOs, community, academia).

Policy context

There are new opportunities and trends that could be harnessed to better enable participation and agency of refugees and others forcibly displaced in decision-making:

- The vital role refugee voices should play in decision-making was highlighted in the **2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants**. The New York Declaration explicitly includes refugees in various procedures and structures. As a primary consideration, in the development of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) a "multi-stakeholder approach" should be adopted with participation of "refugee themselves."¹
- The Global Compact on Refugees offers avenues for refugee participation into the **Global Refugee Forum** to be convened in 2019, 2021 and every four years after that, as well as the **Platforms** which are supposed to address emergency refugee situations at a regional level.²
- **Participatory practices**: There is increasing talk about participation of refugees and other forcibly displaced people in policy and programming — from UNHCR's community-based protection policies³ to

¹ New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1, Para. 69.

² <http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/events/conferences/5b1579427/official-version-draft-3-global-compact-refugees-4-june-2018.html>

³ <http://www.unhcr.org/51d19cb79.html>

organisations like Ground Truth Solutions⁴ — providing evidence of the potential to give refugees a voice and hold NGOs and other actors to greater account. One important initiative was the International Refugee Congress held in Istanbul in May 2018 which provided a platform for refugees to have voice and influence policy discussions.⁵ Other positive practices given by Summit participants included some NGOs actively working to create spaces or supporting autonomous processes of organisation for refugees to influence decision-makers (e.g. StARS in Egypt or MECoPa in Argentina).

- **Localization:** Since the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, there is more talk and some commitments have been made about ‘localization’.⁶ This is, among other things, about shifting funding from larger international NGOs to local actors. Although the GCR recognises the importance of local responses and a multi-stakeholder approach, the mechanisms provided do not specify the ways in which this refugee participation can be effective, and remains to be defined.
- **Refugee-led organisations, networks and advocacy:** As refugee response systems have increasingly failed to find solutions for refugees, there has been growth and development of refugee-led organisations and initiatives. As NRV states: “In the absence of a comprehensive global response to the refugee crisis, refugees, both men and women, have taken matters in their own hands. Exercising their agency, refugees around the world have organized to start businesses, social-enterprises, volunteer networks, radio stations and other initiatives to empower and help their communities, and themselves”.⁷ There are now many good models around the world of how refugee-led organisations and networks form and organise to raise the voice of refugees. For example: in Argentina, the collective ‘Migrants and Colombian Exiles for Peace’ (Migrantes y Exiliados Colombianos por la Paz) built a regional network of refugees and victims of violations of human rights in the context of the armed conflict in Colombia; in Thailand and Sri Lanka, elections are held for refugee camp committees at a local level which are involved in the day-to-day management of the camp and provides a voice for refugees. These lessons could be shared.
- **Global Summit of Refugees:** The Summit itself is the first of its kind, bringing together refugee-led organisations, networks and change-makers from around the world to collaborate on advocacy at an international level. Refugees coming together at an international level creates a space for other actors (states, NGOs, UN bodies) to engage directly with refugees in global policy dialogue.

At the same time, there are significant challenges to refugee participation and agency:

- Despite calls for increased involvement of refugees, there is **very little evidence that refugee and other forcibly displaced communities are better represented** in these processes; and women’s organisations are underrepresented.⁸ As one Summit participant noted: “There are no formal spaces. UNHCR, together with the humanitarian assistance operators, perform a participatory appraisal on an annual basis, but there is no follow-up, results are not shared with the refugees, and no proactive capacity is recognised.”⁹
- **Barriers to refugee participation** include: the high expectations from UNHCR, NGOs, and local stakeholders for refugee-led organisations in decision-making processes, organisations having no funding or limited funding, language barriers, and legal concerns. Other barriers mentioned by refugee-led organisations included: visa and mobility constraints to attend policy discussions, lack of invitation to do so, lack of information, representation in the media of refugees as helpless victims rather than actors of change,¹⁰ and fears about being visible in the context of protection concerns or unrecognised legal

⁴ <http://groundtruthsolutions.org/>

⁵ <https://www.refugeecongress2018.org/>

⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/grand-bargain-shared-commitment-better-serve-people-need>

⁷ <http://www.networkforrefugeevoices.org/gcr-non-paper.html>

⁸ https://www.refugeecongress2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/International-Refugee-Congress-Communique-_May-2018.pdf

⁹ “No existen espacios formales. Acnur junto a la organización operadora de asistencia humanitaria, realiza anualmente un diagnóstico participativo, pero no hay seguimiento, no se comparten resultados con los refugiados y no se es reconoce capacidad propositiva”

¹⁰ http://www.refugeecongress2018.org/resources-files/Consultation_Report_2018_March_03.05.2018.pdf

status.¹¹ As one Summit participant noted: “Refugees are not allowed to be formally organised (...) because we do not have a legal status.”¹²

- In terms of effective refugee representation and participation, there is a need for both **gender parity in representation** and **diversity**. As one Summit participant suggested: “It is important that when key players in the refugee space use the term ‘diversity’, sexual orientation and gender identity are included.” Ensuring diverse and representative refugee voices in global discussions is challenging when much of the dialogue takes place in Geneva or New York, where access is limited to those who are already in Europe or North America or who have documents and the resources to travel. Refugees in detention centres, in protection contexts where the risks of speaking out are significant, who have had less opportunity to develop skills important to policymaking contexts, and where daily existence is a struggle, have less opportunity to participate.
- UNHCR has framed active refugee participation a prerequisite for all its programs and operations, yet refugee participation has been **limited to “tick the box” consultations mostly at the local level and to “subcontracting” relations**. One Summit participant wrote: “There is no political interest or political commitment on the part of national authorities or international organisations such as UNHCR and IOM. The refugee population is not considered as a political subject, capable of contributing to the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies, but is considered only as subjects receiving humanitarian aid.”¹³
- **Refugee participation is mostly welcomed as a way of implementing the agenda of larger institutions and governments** rather than genuine strategic engagement that enables them to drive a response based on what people need and want rather than what goods and services can be supplied. This makes aid much less cost-effective. Refugee-led organisations are rarely provided capacity-building or financial support.¹⁴
- Despite the international community’s recognition of participatory policymaking, as detailed in the Grand Bargain and the Sustainable Development Goals’ mantra to “leave no one behind,” **existing participatory practices fall short**. There is no international refugee body or systematised way for refugees to engage at the United Nations.
- **Some refugee-led initiatives lack sustainable or rigorous governance structures and resourcing**. Several Summit participants noted the challenges of some refugee-led organisations which lack strong governance structures and accountability and do not effectively represent communities (e.g. self-elected leaders without connections or accountability to communities).

Discussion

The discussion at the Summit about participation and agency focused on four aspects: quality and types of participation; organisational structures; agency and collaboration; and sustainability. Working group members reflected on questions including: What kind of participation are we speaking about? How can participation be more effective? What kind of organisational/structured process would be viable and successful? What kind of relationship would we like to establish with stakeholders and other actors involved in decision-making? How do we transform refugee efforts and their organisational processes into something sustainable over time?

- **Quality and types of participation:** The working group discussed the prevalence of passive, consultative participation, such as the completion of surveys to evaluate and justify programs. Refugees rarely hear survey results or any proposals which result from consultations. This is tantamount to false participation and fails to address refugees’ needs and aspirations. Instead, Summit participants said, refugees are prepared to participate and advocate in spaces where they can have a real impact on decision-making.

¹¹ “For people seeking asylum are sometimes worried that their involvement (in advocacy) would lead to a negative outcome of their case.”

¹² “No es permitido a los refugiados, SOVIC-PANAMA existe pero por que fue creada por las victimas colombianas y no tenemos personería jurídica.”

¹³ “No existe interés ni compromiso político de parte de las autoridades nacionales ni de organismos internacionales como ACNUR y OIM. No se considera a la población refugiada como un sujeto político, capaz de aportar en el diseño, implementación y seguimiento de las políticas públicas, sino que se les considera únicamente como sujetos receptores de ayuda humanitaria.”

¹⁴ <http://www.urban-refugees.org/white-paper-global-compact-importance-refugee-led-organizations-effective-refugee-responses/>

They do not want to be considered merely subjects of intervention or tutelage. Refugees are not the input for projects, but proactive agents with capacity for planning, implementing and evaluating policies concerning refugees and others forcibly displaced. On the one hand, it is a first step to have a place of representation in decision-making spaces. However, this is not enough because it can be tokenistic if decision-making spaces are available without the power to influence decisions. In this regard, it is considered necessary to create spaces for broad participation of refugees and other forcibly displaced people where they can actually prepare proposals, to later present them in the spaces where the public policy is being designed, executed and evaluated. **Participation above all means that there is voice and vote in the different instances on equal terms with the other actors involved.**

- **Organisational structures:** The working group discussed the place that the local order would occupy within the global order. Participants talked about the need to establish a global organisation with channels that allow for participation and collaboration that bring together refugee-led organisations and networks at local and regional levels. Although it is the local and regional spaces that define refugees' daily lives and their future, the global decisions are the parameters that govern and allow refugees to circumvent the barriers to their participation.
- **Agency and collaboration:** The working group explored questions regarding the independence and autonomy of refugee-led organisations and networks in relation to other actors. These refugee-led groups should recognise the importance of strategic alliances with other actors and identify potential allies in each one of them. Generally, NGOs that have had the experience and initiative to accompany organisational processes led by refugees and other forcibly displaced people were identified as a fundamental ally.
- **Sustainability:** It is considered that without economic and human resources it is difficult to maintain and develop refugee-led organisations and networks. The discussions focused on two aspects for sustainability: the exchange of experiences and participation in qualified spaces, and leadership training that can have an impact on the strengthening of refugee-led organisations and networks.

3.2 Access to protection, rights and shelter

Legal rights as articulated by International Refugee Law, International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law are at the core of refugee protection. Guaranteeing access to these rights requires shifting the dialogue from 'people in need' to 'people with rights'. Whether residing in countries of first asylum, repatriating to countries of origin or resettling in other countries, refugees need guarantees for their rights and freedoms, clarity about their legal status, and access to legal recourse and assistance.¹⁵ Summit participants also discussed forced return and deportation, separation of families, and good practices such as the avoidance of detention for people in need of international protection.

Policy context

There are several current opportunities for enhancing access to protection, rights and shelter:

- Without leaving aside international law on refugee protection, human rights and humanitarian aid, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (**Global Compact for Migration, or GCM**)¹⁶ is the first of its kind to bring states together to agree on issues of international migration. The GCM includes positive language about protection and rights, including the right to seek asylum.
- The **GCM and GCR** both reinforce refugees' rights to protection and may see a renewed commitment by states to the principle of *non-refoulement*.
- At a national level, some states which have not been signatories to the Refugee Convention have made **positive steps towards greater recognition of rights of refugees** (including in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Jordan)
- The establishment of **Regional Action Plans**, such as the Brazil Action Plan, allows the establishment of regional priorities and articulations between States and civil society organisations. If civil society organisations are engaged in platforms for monitoring and promoting rights such as the Regional

¹⁵ https://www.refugeecongress2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/International-Refugee-Congress-Communique-_May-2018.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

Articular Group of the Brazil Action Plan GAR-PAB, the advocacy possibilities are increased, particularly if these platforms recognise and support the processes of organisation and participation of refugees themselves.¹⁷

- There have been significant **grassroots movements** in many countries focused on rights, shelter and protection, suggesting there is goodwill in host communities that must be harnessed.
- There is a strong case to be made for **granting work rights to refugees**, in that it prevents exploitation of refugees by employers in host countries, while also removing unfair competition with the host community workforce and creating additional taxation revenue for host states.
- Denial of access to rights to refugees is widely used as part of a deterrence strategy to counter perceived pull factors. The consequence of this policy is a scramble by refugees to acquire citizenship. Allowing refugees to access their rights as refugees allows them to keep that status and **envisage safe return** in the future.

At the same time, there are significant challenges for refugees and others who are forcibly displaced in accessing protection, rights and shelter in many parts of the world:

- Many **refugees and other forcibly displaced people are denied basic protections and rights** by the host countries in which they reside, including the right to work, live and move freely, obtain identity documents, and access basic services (legal, education, healthcare etc.).
- **Weak processes** disenable immediate and/or emergency humanitarian assistance with **lack of commitments and resources** from States that allow to effectively overcome the extreme conditions of vulnerability.¹⁸
- Due to their status, many refugees do not have their views represented by their countries of origin, host countries or countries of resettlement. This has left over 20 million refugees with **no political voice and no civil rights**, which violates fundamental democratic norms and refugees' civil and political rights.¹⁹
- In many parts of the world, there is a lack of access to legal processes and protection, resulting in the **return of people to unsafe situations**.
- In some places, **a lack of knowledge among border officials** about international treaties, law and agreements mean that they are not complied with.
- Increasingly, wealthier countries are putting up higher and higher barriers and using **deterrence measures to stop people seeking asylum**, including the use of immigration detention (including for children), restrictive border control policies (e.g. visa processes), outsourcing of border management to poorer countries, forced turn-back policies and other punitive deterrence measures (including separating families).
- The **lack of access to legal advice and representation** in many different parts of the world mean that people may not understand their rights and be able to access needed protection.
- One Summit participant pointed to the shortcomings of mechanisms to **identify children at risk** travelling as part of mixed flows, noting the importance of addressing each child's immediate needs and ensuring the appointment of a legal representative and appropriately qualified guardian for unaccompanied and separated children.
- Summit participants pointed to the need for better ways of **identifying and protecting persons at risk of sexual and gender-based violence and other forms of exploitation and abuse**. Experiences of abuse, exploitation and violence often contribute to decisions to flee. The risk of violence is further exacerbated by unsafe transient shelter options, irregular border crossings, detention, limited access to accurate information and advice, and lack of basic services and resources. In a mixed flow, unaccompanied or separate children, vulnerable women and girls, LGBTI persons and persons living

¹⁷ "El establecimiento de Planes de acción regional como el Plan de Acción Brasil, permite establecer prioridades y articulaciones regionales entre Estados y organizaciones de la sociedad civil. Si las organizaciones de la sociedad civil se articulan entre sí alrededor de plataformas de seguimiento y promoción de derechos como el Grupo Articular Regional del Plan de Acción Brasil GAR-PAB, se incrementan las posibilidades de incidencia y más si estas plataformas reconocen y apoyan los procesos de organización y participación de los propios refugiados."

¹⁸ "Fortalecer los procesos de asistencia humanitaria inmediata y/o de emergencia con mayores compromisos y recursos de los Estados que permitan superar de forma efectiva las condiciones extremas de vulnerabilidad social como parte integral de las medidas de protección."

¹⁹ <http://www.networkforrefugeevoices.org/gcr-non-paper.html>

with disabilities are at heightened risk of violence, exploitation or abuse, including human trafficking, smuggling and extortion.

- Lack of access to protection, rights and adequate shelter leads to **exploitation and abuse by people traffickers and smugglers** and people taking significant personal risks to seek safety elsewhere.

Discussion

Key themes and ideas discussed in the Summit working group on protection, rights and shelter included:

- The need for **reinforcement of the normative frameworks and institutional practices** that already exist, especially of and by States, to guarantee the protection of asylum seekers and other forcibly displaced people seeking refugee status determination and humanitarian assistance.
- The importance of **refugee-led advocacy** for more effective protection policy and to ensure refugees and other forcibly displaced persons can exercise their rights.
- The need to **actively counteract setbacks** to the access to refugee status determination, due process, and other legal pathways to regular status (i.e. complementary protection). The importance of access to documentation and guaranteeing the principle of *non-refoulement* and advocating against detention measures was also discussed.
- Participants agreed that **discussion needs to start from guaranteeing legal rights of people in need of international protection**, including refugees, and building and strengthening institutional structures that make access effective is fundamental for a progressive refugee policy. Whether residing in countries of first asylum, repatriating to countries of origin or resettling in other countries, refugees and other forcibly displaced people need guarantees of their rights and freedoms, clarity about their legal status, and access to legal recourse and assistance.

3.3 Local integration and inclusion

The discussion on *local integration and inclusion* at the Summit focused on how refugees and others who have been forcibly displaced are included and are able to integrate in the places where they live. The use of the term ‘integration’ is not necessarily about integration as a durable solution (which is about a permanent legal status and naturalisation in a country of asylum), but about the process of living in a host community and being included. As such, this discussion included the right to access education, employment, health, and acceptance in host communities. The discussion also covered the current ominous trend on assimilation putting the onus on refugees exclusively.

Policy context

Opportunities and positive trends regarding local integration and inclusion include:

- There are many examples of **refugee-led and host community organisations working collaboratively** to find local solutions to employment, education and health needs, such as setting up community-run schools, training and health centres.
- While it is not always the case, **local or municipal governments** can be more receptive to refugees than national governments, particularly where positive relationships have developed between refugees and members of host communities.
- Where legal protections are provided, including work rights, **local and refugee-run businesses** can be important providers of employment and inclusion.
- **Universal and free access to** public services such as health and education is always a condition that favours integration under equal conditions as it empowers the host community as much as the refugees they are hosting. This practice is feasible and possible in different countries and is a good practice to promote.

Challenges, on the other hand, include:

- **Access to rights to employment, health and education is often limited, denied or unavailable.** Among other factors, the uneven distribution of responsibility for refugee protection among countries, and the reliance of the refugee system on low- and middle-income countries, is straining the capabilities of

many host countries to provide equitable access to good quality services to host communities and refugees alike.²⁰ One Summit participant, for example, identified the challenge of refugee employment in the context of extremely high youth unemployment rates in her country of asylum.

- When humanitarian agencies take on the tasks of education, livelihoods and health service provision for refugees, this amounts to **substitution of the obligation of host states**. The paradoxical consequence of this is that neglected public sectors are not developed and humanitarian organisations become entrenched in intractable situations instead of handing over their operations to refugees and host communities.
- Many Summit participants identified **barriers to accessing education** as an area of key concern. This included: lack of access to primary, secondary and higher education; language barriers for refugees to understand teachers speaking local languages; lack of resources to pay for education-related costs (school fees, books, transport); congestion of students that can exceed 100 students in a classroom; and a lack of employment of teachers from within refugee communities.
- With regards to **concerns about health**, Summit participants mentioned: language barriers in communication between health workers and sick refugees; scarcity or non-availability of first aid providing human resources and medication at the refugee community level; limited or non-provision of awareness campaign on preventative health education and immunisation; lack of programmes on family planning and sexual and reproductive health services.
- Challenges of local integration and inclusion can be greater for **particularly vulnerable groups or individuals**. Summit participants identified the need for targeted support and considerations for integration and inclusion of refugees with physical, mental and psychological disabilities, carriers of HIV/AIDS, victims of sexual and gender-based violence and torture, ethnic groups, unaccompanied minors, orphans, LGBTI community and human rights defenders.

Discussion

Several recurring themes emerged over the two days of discussions:

- **The need for rights-based approaches:** Participants spoke strongly about the importance of shifting policies and responses to refugees from needs-based to rights-based approaches. Participants spoke, for example, about the right to equal access to services, the right to participation, and to ending all forms of discrimination. Some spoke about the need to inform refugees about their rights, and saw refugees themselves as acting as mentors and teachers. There was also a strong suggestion that a monitoring mechanism be established to ensure compliance of host countries with laws, human rights and regulations, especially the fundamental right to seek asylum (particularly *non-refoulement*).
- **Inclusion as a two-way process:** Summit participants discussed the need for approaches to integration and inclusion to be two-way, involving both host and refugee communities, for example, by focusing on commonalities and allowing everyone to join. Some spoke about integration needing to come from both refugees and host communities, and that this could be achieved through means such as: creating joint committees (i.e. involving refugees, civil society and authorities); creating public spaces where refugees and local communities can have intercultural exchanges; holding workshops for local communities to discuss peacebuilding and the situation of refugees, and; developing local-level partnerships between refugees, local communities and authorities. At the same time, it was made clear that inclusion does not equal assimilation, and that there is value, for example, in the children of refugees being able to learn and speak their mother tongue.
- **Avoiding the creation of parallel systems:** Some participants felt that it was important not to create parallel policies or support systems for refugees where the same should apply to refugees, asylum seekers and citizens alike. An alternative suggestion was to consider foregrounding policies based on the concept of equity. This would allow that some specific needs related to language barriers, trauma, potentially high illiteracy rates, etc. may make access to existing services and supports difficult for refugees. Involving refugees in policy-making discussions more broadly (i.e. beyond policies focused on refugees) would help to strengthen existing systems and supports.

- **Refugee participation and agency:** Echoing sentiments expressed in other working groups, discussion about local integration and inclusion pointed to the exclusion of refugees. Often someone else is talking *for* refugees (e.g. municipalities), and refugee communities want to change this. Furthermore, refugees should not be limited to their ‘refugee’ or ‘foreigner’ role, but should be allowed to participate in other discussions (for example, in discussions on how to address problems of host countries and communities, environmental issues etc.), just like any citizen living there. Refugees should see themselves as active change-makers. An example given was from Sweden, of how refugees started informal groups which included local community members to represent refugee needs and answer questions. These support groups enabled a more unified voice. As a result, refugees started to be more integrated (including in employment), honest discussions took place including on cultural issues, and refugees became seen as agents of change, not as ‘beneficiaries’.
- **Equitable access to services:** Discussion on access to services went beyond the differential access for people based on legal status (i.e. citizen, refugee, asylum seeker etc.) but to the need for equitable access for diverse groups within refugee communities. For example, the lack of services or exclusion of LGBTI people in existing services, including refugee services, was spoken about. Barriers to equitable access to services include homophobia, gender inequality and racism. It was suggested that, even at a national level where access to some services and rights is denied, at local level these still exist informally.
- **Being inclusive of diversity:** Participants spoke of the need to actively ensure that space is given for a diversity of experiences and voices to be heard, particularly in advocacy informing services and policies. Ideas put forward included: that refugees have opportunities to learn about the different needs and the situation of different vulnerable groups of people, in particular LGBTI, in order to reduce threats from within the refugee population; that a certification for LGBTI sensitive professionals be introduced to diminish the risk of exclusions of persons from the LGBTI community from shelters as well as to increase support of shelter staff and NGOs; for women’s and LGBTI voices to be heard and to stop pre-packaged support activities; and that services have sensitive processes in place (trauma, gender, etc.).
- **Employment and economic considerations:** The importance of employment to integration and inclusion was discussed. This must begin with host countries recognising that refugees should have the right to work and that they have different backgrounds and levels of education and skills. At a local level, there is a need to focus on capacity-building to create job opportunities and for programs that facilitate the recognition of refugees’ qualifications and skills in host countries. Another strategy is to provide training for refugees to gain new skills, such as in technology industries, to enhance employment outcomes.
- **Terminology and knowledge:** A series of inter-related discussions concerned how terminology and knowledge is created, understood and shared, and the implications this has on local integration and inclusion. Some spoke about the need to have a common understanding of the terms ‘local integration’ and ‘inclusion’ and that, to facilitate effective integration and inclusion, the challenges need to be known, shared and addressed. Many spoke about the problems related to the negative use of the term ‘refugees’, particularly in media narratives, and the need for inclusive counter-narratives. Finally, there is a need for refugee researchers and academics to position themselves in academia in order to increase their influence. A challenge to this is that refugee researchers don’t always have access to funding, and that refugees are not sufficiently consulted in funding processes that often overlook their knowledge and skills.
- **Good practices that facilitate local integration and inclusion:** A number of positive practices that facilitate local integration and inclusion were discussed by the working group, with an overarching suggestion made to create a google document for refugee communities from different parts of the world to share positive practices. Positive practices that were discussed included:
 - Community guides as mentors for newly arrived refugees: recruiting people with a refugee background to provide integration services for new refugees (noting that many resettled refugees do this work on a voluntary basis); the already established refugees can function as references and enablers in the new country (e.g. facilitating employment). (Australia)
 - Development of a game so newly arrived refugees can learn things from everyday life in the host country in a playful way, e.g. making a doctor’s appointment.

- Bridging courses to university: offering a preparatory course which then allows refugees to access university. (Australia)
- “Opening Doors” Network: government, private sector, church, civil society, refugees working together to help integrate refugees (create an ecosystem for refugees). (Mexico)
- YAPILIL App: Suggestion to use the concept of an existing app YAPILIL (to get information on health issues in Africa based on volunteer doctors/health staff) for refugees to spread information. (Africa)

3.4 Durable solutions and movement

The focus of discussion at the Summit on *durable solutions and movement* was about how refugees and other forcibly displaced people can access or negotiate longer-term, sustainable solutions that mean they are no longer considered ‘refugees’ or ‘people in need of international protection’. While durable solutions are usually talked about in three ways — repatriation to the country of origin, local integration, or third country resettlement — this discussion included solutions currently being described as ‘complementary pathways’, such as being able to move to a third country through labour mobility, education or family reunion schemes, or through community sponsorship programs. In addition, this working group opened up discussion on how the movement of people fleeing persecution can be safe, normalised and enabled.

Policy context

There are new opportunities and trends that could be built on to create more durable solutions and safe movement for refugees and other forcibly displaced people:

- The objective in the GCR is to enlarge the pool of countries that offer **resettlement** as this has been limited mostly to the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Scandinavian countries and Germany. There is the potential for more countries to open up resettlement pathways.
- The GCR also attempts to increase resettlement through **complementary pathways** which aims to use educational opportunities (foreign student programs for instance), family reunification, labour mobility and private sponsorship.
- There has been a willingness in a number of traditional resettlement countries to learn from Canada’s effective private sponsorship model and build **community sponsorship schemes** that involve local communities in funding and supporting refugee resettlement.
- There is an opportunity to highlight that those with temporary protection because they are fleeing conflict rather than persecution (in the case of Europe, the dichotomy between 1951 Convention refugees and ‘subsidiary’ refugees) **equally require durable solutions**.

At the same time, there are significant challenges in making durable solutions a reality:

- **Resettlement places have been decreasing** particularly since the US significantly reduced its resettlement program in 2017. At its best, this solution was available to less than 1% of the world’s refugee population.
- **Resettlement criteria between countries has not been transparent nor coordinated**, and there is evidence that eligibility for resettlement is highly varied and determined by the priorities (and prejudices) of resettlement states.
- Movement of refugees from their country of asylum, other than through resettlement, is generally referred to as ‘secondary movement’ and has increasingly been referred to as ‘irregular’ migration. There has been a noticeable regression toward **criminalising irregular migration** calling it illegal migration. This trend has led to the detention of migrants, including children, and their separation from their parents, representing a clear erosion and violation of their most basic human rights.
- Although both Global Compacts and the New York Declaration were greatly motivated by Europe’s 2015 refugee ‘crisis’ which was primarily a massive **secondary movement**, the GCR does not directly address this concern or attempt to reflect on the means to address it. Therefore, concerns related to refugee movements that are not related to protection concerns are generally treated under the Global Compact on Migration.
- **Returns** in the GCR and in most government policy discussions (such as at UNHCR Executive Committee meetings) are consistently referred to as ‘the preferred solution’ not only of states but of refugees. The

GCR goes even further by stating that: “it is recognized that voluntary returns are not necessarily conditioned on the accomplishment of political solutions in the country of origin”. In effect, this means that the return of refugees can take place whether or not transitional justice, peace, or basic human rights have been achieved. Furthermore, the GCR foresees assistance in countries of origin to remove obstacles to returns, including tripartite agreements. All these measures and language could make it easier to organise returns regardless of their voluntary nature.

Discussion

The working group on durable solutions and movement focussed their discussions on the different spaces where change was possible, and what influence or actions refugee-led organisations or networks could have in these different spaces. Ideas were discussed in terms of community capital, politico-legal spaces, socio-economic spaces, and cultural spaces, and mapped out potential areas of focus for refugee-led organisations and networks working at various levels (i.e. international, regional, national or local).

- **Community capital:** Participants discussed options for refugee-led organisations or networks in advocating for greater refugee representation at different decision-making levels and in sharing the knowledge of refugee communities. This could include working with UNHCR field offices, other international organisations and local organisations to advocate for greater assistance for refugees to find durable solutions through engagement in dialogue. Refugee-led organisations or networks could play a role in influencing research agendas or in conducting their own research to provide an evidence base on specific areas of their own concern, ensuring that resources and recommendations on long-term durable solutions and movement recognise and give voice to the perspectives of refugees and others forcibly displaced.
- **Politico legal spaces:** The group spoke about the need for refugee-led lobbying and campaigning in host countries that would encourage governments to take action and to form better public policies. In countries of potential resettlement, there is a need to influence political parties to commit to accepting refugees and having a humanitarian intake or program. Achieving this would also require connecting with and challenging both the media and governments. The voices of refugees and others forcibly displaced need to be heard in the media to better inform the public debate and, ultimately, the welcome and integration of refugees and other forcibly displaced people in their new countries. Refugee representation in media should influence coverage of issues affecting their lives, and examine standards that would promote reporting that respects refugees and other forcibly displaced people. Participants spoke about the need to mainstream the refugee-led media movement, requiring greater space be given for stories and information about the global nature of displacement crises. On a practical level, the group discussed the need for greater access to documentation and identification (e.g. passport and status) that would enable forcibly displaced populations greater access to durable solutions. There is also a need for better legal representation and legal information for those forcibly displaced. An idea that was put forward was to lobby for all countries to commit to ensuring there is independent legal aid for people seeking asylum.
- **Socio economic spaces:** Participants discussed the value of connecting with development actors such as UNDP to support and build effective durable solutions. Refugee-led organisations and networks should be able to communicate directly with funding bodies to create projects and assistance for refugees. In terms of broadening access to durable solutions, participants suggested refugee-led networks and organisations engage in dialogue with universities and academic institutions to provide more scholarships and opportunities for refugees to pursue higher education. There were a range of suggestions about how a global refugee network could connect with other networks at various levels (national, regional etc.) and exchange expertise across different geographic regions and levels.
- **Cultural spaces:** In order to enable durable solutions, the group talked about the need to promote cultural exchange between refugee and host society communities, and to invest in maintaining cultural inheritance. This echoed the discussion of the working group on local inclusion and integration, which also emphasised the importance of two-way dialogue and understanding. The importance of language transition supports was also discussed as a way of facilitating the admission of refugees to new education systems.

- In addition to mapping out these different spaces and opportunities, the working group on durable solutions and movement discussed the importance of ensuring that **the perspectives and voices of refugees in vulnerable or critical situations** are taken into account—for example, ensuring those in refugee camps, detention or transit are able to influence discussions and the advocacy work of refugee-led networks or organisations. This could be done at a local level, ensuring these ideas and concerns are moved up to advocacy at an international level.
- Participants spoke about the importance of refugees, host communities, humanitarian and development actors **working together to find durable solutions and complementary pathways**. One of the suggestions made was to monitor changes that are happening at all the levels, and to identify and promote countries that have been doing good work.

3.5 Root causes and system change

Discussion at the Summit on *root causes and system change* was about how the underlying reasons why people are forced to seek international protection are addressed. Tackling the root causes of displacement is usually seen as the remit of political decision-makers such as in the UN Security Council, or as issues relating to human and political rights which is dealt with at the Human Rights Council and its Treaty Bodies, not to mention through regional or bilateral negotiations. This discussion focussed on the role that refugees and other forcibly displaced people can play in holding parties to conflict and persecution to account, and in influencing the overarching systems (political systems, global governance, international frameworks, etc.) that both contribute to (and sometimes undermine) peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Policy context

Opportunities to address root causes and bring about system change include:

- The distribution **mechanisms of responsibility-sharing** proposed in the GCR are an opportunity if their approaches are opened not only in the framework of responses to large movements of people but also to a shared and coordinated action of support for peace processes and actions to reduce violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Summits of solidarity and other global and regional mechanisms can also support the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the reconstruction of territories affected by war. Resolution 60147/2005 of the General Assembly of the United Nations is a framework that must be resumed so that the expelling States assume commitments in the integral reparation of the victims of serious violations of human rights, as part of their quota of responsibility.²¹
- Asymmetrical warfare, lack of respect for international law, targeting of civilians, etc. are all root causes which are leading to more refugees for longer periods of time. As a consequence, a handful of countries and their citizens are paying for the majority of the response, with little accountability for those responsible for the conflicts. **A multi-stakeholder approach** where refugee participation is a facet is seen not only as a more holistic way of responding, hoping that as such it will be more effective, it is also seen as a way to increase the capacity to respond to ever growing needs.
- Another facet of this is the involvement of the **private sector** as it is seen as a way to employ refugees and help finance current responses, as can be seen in the GCR, however nothing is said about **accountability** of these actors including in terms of root causes.

There are significant challenges in addressing root causes and system change:

- For years now **political actors have shifted their responsibilities and failure onto the humanitarian sector** which is not empowered to address root causes of persecution and conflict. The humanitarian sector can do little more than pay lip-service to the issue. In noting the growing numbers of refugees

²¹ “Los mecanismos de distribución de la responsabilidad propuestos en el pacto son una oportunidad si sus enfoques se abren no sólo en el marco de respuestas a grandes movimientos de personas sino también a una acción compartida y coordinada de apoyo a los procesos de Paz y acciones tendientes a aminorar vulneraciones al DIDH y al DIH. Las cumbres de solidaridad y demás mecanismos globales y regionales pueden también apoyar la resolución pacífica de conflictos y la reconstrucción de los territorios afectados por la Guerra/ La resolución 60147/2005 de la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas es un marco que debe ser retomado para que los Estados expulsores asuman compromisos en la reparación integral de las víctimas de graves violaciones a los Derechos Humanos, como parte de su cuota de responsabilidad.”

worldwide, the GCR clearly underlines that it is first and foremost the responsibility of refugees' countries of origin. Recognising its limited influence, the humanitarian sector's main response has been to focus on prevention and early warning systems.

- The current humanitarian model at the local level treats refugees as passive recipients of aid. While proclaiming to be neutral and impartial, **humanitarian responses tend to deny refugees civic and political rights** because they complicate the management of crises. This means that humanitarian agencies find it easier to assuage the political needs of the host country and country of origin than to take into consideration the very legitimate concerns of the victims. This often contributes to the intractability of refugee situations, prolonging refugees' dependency on international assistance.

Discussion

The discussion focused on the fact that acting on the causes of forced migration is essential to finding lasting and comprehensive solutions to refugee crises. Questions discussed included: How can refugees intervene in situations of serious violations of human rights in their countries of origin? How to overcome the invisibility or the biased information that tends to justify the actions of States?

In order to offer real alternatives these challenges, the discussion must start by recognising the urgent need to include **refugee participation in decision-making processes**. This must go well beyond token representation of refugees in some international meetings while, in so many local contexts, refugees remain invisible, in precarious situations and living without basic rights. Serious reform of advocacy processes is required, to reposition **refugees and other forcibly displaced people as key actors** in local, regional and global decisions which directly affect them.

This must include making visible the serious violations of human rights that cause forced migration, using different communication strategies to **challenge impunity in the countries of expulsion, combat discrimination and xenophobia in host communities and call for solidarity in the protection of human rights**. Such an approach must start from the principle that nobody who suffers violations of human rights should be silenced.

To achieve this, Summit participants recognised the need to **strengthen the capacity** of different actors including: civil society organisations, refugee diaspora, host communities, and the private sector.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Key recommendations

The following are overarching recommendations arising from the discussion at the Global Summit of Refugees:

1. An inclusive international platform for refugee participation and self-representation must be established, made up of a **representative network of refugee community organisations, initiatives and change-makers** from around the world.
2. Refugee-led organisations and networks must be **guaranteed a seat at the table at all levels** (local, state, regional and international) to represent the concerns of affected populations in policy and decision-making fora relating to forced displacement, including at: the Global Refugee Forum and UNHCR Executive Committee meetings.
3. All actors involved in international protection must consider and actively work towards the meaningful **inclusion and enablement of refugee-led organisations and initiatives as equal partners** in the pursuit of solutions to forced displacement. This includes considerations about allocation of resources, ways to support leadership and capacity building requests made by refugee-led organisations and networks, and analysing and addressing barriers to participation.

4.2 Additional recommendations

A series of additional recommendations were included in the policy discussion paper prior to the Summit, based on proposals put forward by different refugee-led organisations and networks, or by Summit participants.

4. The international community must **train and employ refugees** to run camps, contract refugee-led community-based organisations to distribute aid and facilitate refugee representation in local, municipal and national advisory and budgetary boards. This will increase the impact of programs, empower refugee agency and increase refugee awareness and use of the services at their disposal. It will also free international agencies to focus on emergencies.
5. States, UNHCR, and other UN agencies must recognise the barriers to entry into international processes for refugees and **take all steps necessary to enable refugees' participation in global forums**, such as provision of translation services, travel assistance, revised criteria for accreditation for displaced communities as well as **address systematic** marginalisation refugees can experience, in particular women and girls, LGBTI community members, youth, and persons with a disability.
6. Funds allocated to Inter-governmental and NGOs should be earmarked incrementally and predictably to **strengthen and advance refugee-led organisational structures**. Spaces should be created for refugees to come together to organise and to engage in dialogue for the formulation and monitoring of public policies related to refugees, and to ensure that refugee-led organisations have sound governance and accountability structures.
7. **Refugee voices should be amplified to ensure** that refugee communities narrate and promote their own perspectives, experiences and ideas **to shape discourses on refugee matters**. As such, support should be given to **refugee-led multi-media initiatives and other social, cultural, and academic means**. Refugees' access to technology should be supported by national and international development and humanitarian actors.
8. National governments should open up and **synchronise their social and economic policies** to improve refugees and host communities' access to basic services, including employment, vocational skills training and education, and incentives to encourage the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. The potential for refugees to actively participate in the **economic development of a local community** through business development and entrepreneurial activities, may assist to reduce or prevent conflict with host communities and address misconceptions that refugees are a burden.
9. To improve access to quality education for refugees and host communities, **qualified refugee teachers should be appointed in public and private schools** to address teacher shortages and resolve language barriers. Where formal education is not an option, steps should be taken to ensure that certified, flexible, and **high quality non-formal education** is available and that students are not deprived of opportunities to continue their education from pre-school to higher education.
10. Space should be created for civil society, including refugee-led organisations and academia, to **rethink durable solutions**. This could include leading exploration of the **potential of pendulum migration** (i.e. free movement between countries of asylum and origin without the need for permanent repatriation) as a strategy for supporting reconstruction, rehabilitation in countries of origin, and possible voluntary repatriation.
11. **The number of resettlement places should be increased**, and new pathways developed to enable mobility of refugees between countries including through private sponsorship, humanitarian admission, work, study and family reunification programs.
12. Refugees must be seen as legitimate political **actors who can participate in peace building, transitional justice and reconstruction**. The humanitarian plight of refugees should not be held against their enjoyment of civil and political rights to measure and ensure compliance with international law.