![UNHCR — The UN Refugee Agency logo]

DIVISION OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS
Partnership and Coordination Service (PCS)

LOCALIZATION IN UNHCR-LED COORDINATION STRUCTURES[1]

Meaningful engagement and inclusion of organizations led by forcibly displaced, stateless, or other specific groups, as well as local organizations in UNHCR-led coordination structures, response plans and planning cycles is key to successful and sustainable responses. This checklist advises UNHCR staff, namely sector leads, programme and inter-agency coordinators on how to ensure such inclusion.

This document refers to "Refugee-led Organizations" (RLOs) in an all-encompassing manner, which includes organizations led by women, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons, minorities and indigenous peoples or other groups. The term "local organizations" also includes organizations led by stateless persons and host community members as well as local NGOs. It is only relevant to organizations led by other forcibly displaced, where the context applies (e.g. mixed situations)[2].

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[1] UNHCR-led coordination structures include the Refugee Coordination Model and any other coordination structure where UNHCR leads the operational response. This guidance note does not apply to IASC coordination structures, where a specific note applied. See: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/operational-response/iasc-guidance-strengthening-participation-representation-and-leadership-local-and-national-actors.
[2] Internally displaced people organizations are included in this guidance document for scenarios where the "Note on Mixed Situations" is applied. See footnote 1 for IASC coordination structures situations.

Policy framework

UNHCR is committed to strengthening the role of RLOs in line with the Principles of Partnership, which acknowledge diversity as an asset of the humanitarian community and recognize interdependence among humanitarian organizations. UNHCR therefore aims to build and nurture effective partnerships based on the principles of equality, transparency, result-orientation, responsibility sharing, and complementarity.

This commitment is also reflected in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), embracing a "whole-of-society approach" and recognizing the role of civil society organizations[3]. At the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, UNHCR also committed, through the Grand Bargain, to strengthen local humanitarian actors efforts to put in place effective emergency preparedness measures and deliver relevant responses, and to engage with them as equal partners.

UNHCR commitment on localization is further noted as former co-lead of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) working group on localization which developed the IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms, which focuses on IASC humanitarian coordination structures.

UNHCR personnel should actively seek to foster the meaningful participation of RLOs and other local organizations in all UNHCR-led coordination structures and planning cycles.

Participants at the Annual Talks between UNHCR and NGOs raise hands to intervene during the main session on localization. © UNHCR/Mark Henley

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[3] https://www.unhcr.org/5c658aed4, paragraph 40.

How to increase engagement of RLOs and local actors in coordination structures

The non-exhaustive list of actions below is designed to facilitate full access of RLOs and other local partners in all processes of humanitarian action (assessments, planning, coordination, fundraising, implementation, monitoring, etc.):

Identification and inclusion

- ☑ **Identify and map** (actively) RLOs and relevant local organizations (who does what and where, by sector); be specifically attentive to specific groups (women, people with disabilities, minorities, LGBTIQ+ persons, etc.); explore the possibility for partners or networks with which we are already engaging to lead on this mapping.
- ☑ **Offer** induction sessions for RLOs and local partners on coordination structures and their functionalities. Where possible, organize coaching and mentoring with other partners/networks.
- ☑ **Provide** live interpretation where possible, or at least facilitate pre-coordination meetings and translate key documents in relevant local languages; avoid or explain used jargon (including abbreviations).
- ☑ **Ensure** safety before, during and after meetings. For example, by concluding meetings at appropriate time for participants to return home safely, or by providing logistical support and ensuring wheelchair access.
- ☑ **Identify** potential financial support to facilitate travel and physical attendance of coordination meetings or for equipment for online participation of representatives of field-based RLOs and other local organizations.
- ☑ **Collaborate** with relevant authorities to ensure that representatives of RLOs have travel documents (and other documents required to ensure they can circulate freely within and outside the country for events requiring this).

Local leadership of coordination mechanisms

- ☑ **Include,** where possible, RLOs or other local organizations as co-leaders/co-coordinators/co-chairs of working groups.
- ☑ **Provide** support to strengthen RLOs' and local organizations' leadership in refugee coordination structures, with inclusion in strategic advisory groups (SAG) or co-leadership/co-chairmanship and where relevant support the creation of networks.
- ☑ **Encourage** organizations to hire volunteers/employees with a refugee background and from local communities for their projects/programmes to strengthen local ownership and capacity.

Communication

- ☑ **Identify** jointly with local organizations and RLOs preferred mix of information circulation methods (do not rely only on emails and portals).
- ☑ **Translate** all key documents, press material, and information available in relevant languages.
- ☑ **Recognize** RLOs' and other local organizations' efforts and partnerships and ensure that their contributions are highlighted in internal and external products, such as donor reporting, situational reports, Refugee Response Plans and related products (ensure to get consent of the organization due to potential security issues).

Coordinated plans

- ☑ **Include** RLOs and local organizations at all stages of development of preparedness and contingency plans, Refugee Response Plans (RRPs), resource mobilization strategies, and other inter-agency plans at country, regional and global levels.
- ☑ **Support** fundraising efforts of RLOs and other local organizations to receive direct funding in line with the 25% Grand Bargain commitment, such as by including them in appeal documents like the Refugee Response Plans and to respective launches.

Mutual capacity and skill sharing

- ☑ **Conduct** comprehensive learning needs assessments to identify potential areas for capacity sharing. This should include the learning needs for international actors, for example on local practices, customs, implementation arrangements.
- ☑ **Collaborate** with RLOs and other local actors to establish relevant institutional and technical capacity sharing opportunities, for example regular symposia on specific themes (supply, procurement, HR matters, etc.).
- ☑ **Seek out** opportunities and allocate funds for RLOs and other local actors to share relevant knowledge, expertise with international actors.
- ☑ **Establish** groups for institutional and technical capacity sharing to facilitate relevant training and information exchange.
- ☑ **Promote** refugee participation in humanitarian and development training, course and certification programmes.

Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)

- ☑ **Involve** RLOs and local organizations in the matching/collaboration for the implementation of country Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledges and include them early in the development of new joint pledges for future GRFs.
- ☑ **Assess** options for engagement of RLOs in national arrangements (support platforms, initiatives, RRPs other mechanisms) supporting the inclusion of refugees in national services, to translate objectives of the GCR into concrete actions.

UNHCR and its partner Humanitarian Mission Proliska provide rapid support to people in damaged building in Dnipro, Ukraine. © UNHCR/Oleksandra Lytvynenko

How to measure localization in coordination

UNHCR colleagues responsible for coordination are recommended to monitor progress with regards to a) identification and inclusion of RLOs and other local organizations, and b) of local leadership of coordination mechanisms.

a) Identification and inclusion

	Formulation	Means of verification	Target
Indicator	% of RLOs and other local organizations actively participating in UNHCR-led coordination mechanisms	Numerator/denominator	>50%
Numerator	# of RLOs and other local organizations participating in at least one coordination working group	Attendance lists	
Denominator	# of RLOs and local organizations working in response to refugee situations	Mapping or 3W exercises, RRP partner lists	
Note	Disaggregate by type of organization if possible, when collecting data[4]		

b) Local leadership of coordination mechanisms

	Formulation	Means of verification	Target
Indicator	% of field-level coordination forums with RLOs as co-lead, co-chair or Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) member	Numerator/denominator	100%
Numerator	# of RLOs acting as co-lead, co-chair or member of SAG	Coordination structure organigramme	
Denominator	# of field-level coordination forums	Coordination structure organigramme	
Note	If the same organization co-leads, co-chairs or is member of SAG in multiple forums, then count it equal to the number of forums		

Examples of inclusion of RLOs and local organizations in UNHCR-led coordination structures

Refugee response in Romania

UNHCR opened access to the RRP Livelihoods working group in Romania to all entities relevant to improving self-reliance of refugees, including local NGOs, local language schools, and the private sector. UNHCR provided funding to key local NGOs, such as "Ateliere Fara Frontiere" (AFF), which began piloting the "Graduation Approach" - an internationally recognized methodology for reducing extreme poverty. In this example, the combination of UNHCR's knowledge of best practices from other countries, with the local knowledge of AFF is hoped to provide a model to achieve self-reliance for extremely poor refugees and their hosts which can be replicated by state authorities and other local NGOs in Romania.

Another good example from Romania is the work conducted by the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) network co-led by UNHCR and World Vision International. The latter agreed to handover the co-leadership of the groups to a local NGO within one year from the start of the coordination forum to allow time for coaching and capacity strengthening. The strategy developed by the network was in fact focused specifically on local actors which have identified gaps in proper PSEA frameworks in their organizations. UNHCR, with the support of UNICEF, further translated some material in local language and delivered two training of trainers with local actor representatives to disseminate knowledge about PSEA frameworks, how to set them up and implement them. The lack of these frameworks is seen as one of the main obstacles for local organizations to receive international donor funding.

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[4] See https://intranet.unhcr.org/content/dam/unhcr/intranet/staff%20support/interagency/documents/english/refugee-response-plans/3b.%20Regional%20RRP-%20Narrative%20Template%20Instructions.pdf, page 12.

Inclusive coordination in Moldova

The Refugee Coordination Forum in Moldova communicates with all partners both in local language and in English. This is ensured not only through the dissemination of messages and documents in both languages, but also during meetings, where live interpretation is provided by the engagement of local professional interpreters. Furthermore, the coordination team in Moldova has ensured inclusion of local actors also at leadership level, where co-leadership is arranged with local authorities or local partners depending on the topic.

The National NGO Coordination Forum in Lebanon

The National NGO Coordination Forum brings together local organizations working in the refugee response in Lebanon. UNHCR funds the position of the coordinator and ensures the forum is represented in inter-sectoral meetings as well as all other events linked to the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), which is the country chapter of the Syria Refugee Response and Resilience Plan (3RP). Live interpretation English-Arabic is provided by UNHCR in all key inter-agency events and workshops, and all trainings are provided both in English and Arabic, including on how to draft project proposals or how to become an appealing partner in the LCRP. Finally, the LCRP monitoring and evaluation plan includes indicators on localization such as percentage of funds going directly to local NGOs to stimulate direct funding to local partners.

The Uganda Country Response Plan

The Community Technology Empowerment Network (CTEN) is one of the 140 partners that contribute to the Uganda Refugee Response Plan. CTEN is an RLO that was founded in 2016 by South Sudanese refugees as a community-based initiative in Rhino Camp, a refugee settlement in the West Nile region of Uganda. CTEN's strength lies in the fact that it's comprised mostly of refugees who understand refugee dynamics. CTEN has established good working relations with the Ugandan Government at both district and county level, Refugee Welfare Councils (RWCs), youth groups and other partner agencies in the refugee response.

The Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) in Uganda

The Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) is a novel national refugee platform that brings together refugee leaders from all settlements and Kampala. This platform re-presents the refugee voice in Uganda, ensuring that refugees play a central and vital role in the refugee response. The REF is held quarterly before every CRRF Steering Group, which includes two elected members of the REF who represent the refugee voice. This representation ensures that issues and decisions affecting refugees are timely brought directly to the attention of the CRRF Steering Group. Under the umbrella of the CRRF, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNHCR lead the coordination of refugee interventions.

Regional Level: The Venezuela Situation

UNHCR and IOM co-lead the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (R4V), which coordinates response efforts for the Venezuela situation across 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean through the regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP). In this context, almost 100 refugee-and migrant-led organizations collaborate in the implementation of the world's largest response plan, either as appealing organizations or as funded partners of UN agencies.

Across the region, many of the refugee-and migrant-led organizations are represented by an umbrella organization called "Coalición por Venezuela", which maintains a high profile at R4V events, including the 2021 International Donors' Conference. Through this coalition, these important actors are part of the RMRP's programme cycle, both at regional and national levels, providing valued contributions in the development of the planning assumptions and strategy, as well as operational contributions.

The Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (R4V) coordinates response efforts for the Venezuela situation across 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean through the regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP). Photo: © UNHCR/Jaime Giménez

References & Resources

- Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)
- 2018 UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity
- 2008 Manual on a Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations
- Understanding Community-Based Protection
- 2006 Tool for Participatory Assessment in UNHCR Operations
- AGENDA FOR HUMANITY Annex to the Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit (A/70/709, 2 February 2016)
- May 2020 IASC Interim Guidance on Localisation and the COVID-19 Response
- IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms

Best practices

- Refugee engagement and participation in the Global Refugee Forum
- Communities Getting Involved: COVID-19 (June 2020)
- UNHCR NGO Innovation Award 2020 Refugee-led Organizations in the COVID-19 Response
- At the Heart of the Community: How to work with community-based organizations