Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP) 2024
Solutions in Action: Towards the 2030 Roadmap
NGO Statement

We, the participating non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP) 2024, offer the following comments and policy recommendations to actors involved in refugee resettlement, complementary pathways and post-arrival settlement and integration support.

Introduction

The number of people forcibly displaced and in need of a durable, safe third country solution has increased each year over the past two decades. Existing problems of protracted displacement have been exacerbated by a succession of mass displacement crises in all regions of the world. At the same time, many countries involved in refugee resettlement are trying to find solutions to housing shortages and cost-of-living crises, reducing political willingness to respond to urgent refugee protection needs.

Simultaneously, many countries are grappling with labour shortages and the need for people with the skills to, among other things, build desperately needed housing and care for ageing populations. Local and diaspora communities, businesses, faith networks, local governments, universities and other non-state actors are demonstrating a willingness to offer support to refugees, with the benefits of multi-stakeholder collaboration clearly evident.

There has also been a growing recognition of something that has always been true: that while refugees need safety and a secure future, they are also people with skills, knowledge, aspirations, connections and a drive to support themselves and each other, to reunite with loved ones, and to contribute to any country that fully offers them this chance. It is not surprising that we have seen growing interest in migration pathways that can complement resettlement while recognising the strengths and agency of refugees. This forum's change of name to the Consultations on Resettlement *and* Complementary Pathways recognises the need to innovate and work collaboratively to increase safe and durable third country solutions for refugees.

Reviewing the year that has been

The 2023 **Global Refugee Forum** enabled the global community to come together to pledge practical action to support refugees and host communities, resulting in many commitments that will strengthen resettlement and complementary pathways if and when implemented. NGOs were among those making significant commitments. We will hold ourselves to account while calling on other pledging entities to honour their commitments.

In June 2023, we made eight recommendations in the NGO Statement at the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement. We stressed the importance of complementary pathways being additional to resettlement, offering solutions which are truly durable. We called for equity in access to resettlement and complementary pathways, for further work on refugee travel documents, greater investment in pre-departure support and long-term integration, and more robust monitoring and evaluation. We emphasised that the participation and leadership of people with lived experience of forced displacement was vital to building communities of welcome.

We're happy to say that some of this work has progressed, and that dialogue is continuing. Sessions at this week's gathering will look specifically at host country perspectives, needs-based identification, and pre- and post-arrival linkages, the issue of refugee travel documents, the role of refugee-led organisations in resettlement and complementary pathways, partnerships and how we share knowledge about post-arrival integration and settlement.

With regards to **meaningful refugee participation**, we are pleased to have seen a deepening of engagement of experts with lived refugee experience in the CRCP through the ongoing work of our colleagues from the CRCP Refugee Advisory Group. This year the CRCP participation guidelines were revised to include an allocation for multiple refugee representatives in each country delegation. We have come a

long way since 2012 when this forum became one of the first multilateral gatherings to include formal refugee representation by allocating up to five spots for refugee representatives. Today, 60 delegates in the room identified themselves in registrations as refugee representatives. Many of the representatives present have been supported financially and practically by government agencies and NGOs who recognise that voices of lived experience are vital to the effectiveness of this forum. To the NGOs and government agencies in the room who have yet to do this, we encourage you to support diverse refugee participation next year. There is still much to be done to ensure refugee participation is supported and resourced, and that people with personal experience of displacement can play a greater role in developing durable solutions.

Recommendations

This year we have five recommendations for sustainable and equitable action to support durable solutions for refugees:

1. Expand resettlement and maintain a protection-centred focus

NGOs echo the call from UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi for "all states with the means to step up and provide sustainable and multi-year resettlement commitments to offer safety and protection to those in need". NGOs congratulate states that have committed to expanding their resettlement programs. We share our frustration and concern about the reduction or pause on other country programs at a time of such pressing global need.

We call on states to maintain and expand resettlement programs, noting that resettlement is and should always remain a central protection tool and lifeline for refugees in greatest need. For LGBTQI+ people, resettlement can be lifesaving. 64 states around the world criminalise same-sex intimacy, and persecution based on gender identity and expression is widespread. At-risk LGBTQI+ people often face systemic barriers to accessing safety within the global refugee and asylum system. For women and girls experiencing sexual and gender-based violence where proximity to perpetrators presents significant risks, resettlement can be a lifeline. For people with disabilities and complex health needs, resettlement can be both a lifeline and a constructive contribution by resettlement states to easing pressure on healthcare systems in countries hosting large numbers of refugees. Resettlement countries should establish a fast-track resettlement stream for refugees facing imminent danger, similar to Canada's human rights defenders stream, to ensure this lifeline can be attained when needed.

To expand resettlement and maintain its protection focus, states must adopt multi-year planning and funding as well as flexible, unallocated quotas to the greatest possible extent, using remote interviewing and other innovative modalities for efficient processing. We commend those States that ensure their resettlement programs are truly needs-based and align with UNHCR's resettlement priorities, and ask all states to eliminate restrictive and highly questionable selection criteria related to so-called "integration potential".

2. Adopt innovations and ensure equity in responses

We have seen many admirable and innovative adaptations in recent responses to people fleeing different crises, particularly displacement from Afghanistan and Ukraine. These include: the use of new visa pathways; rapid creation of additional quotas; use of community sponsorship; freedom of movement and refugee choice about where to settle; proactive provisions for family unity; and quick access to employment authorisation. However, these policy responses have not been equitably applied – including more recently for those displaced from Sudan, Myanmar and Palestine. We call on states to take the best innovations and adaptations in creating safe pathways and develop them into future responses to crises. With regards to emerging complementary pathways in many countries, we call for equitable access regardless of nationality, and for access to be more widely available to refugees in protracted situations.

3. Invest in and build linkages between host and third countries

We call for greater investment in host country contexts and pre-departure systems – to facilitate smoother and timelier resettlement and complementary pathways, to increase opportunities for skills development

that can benefit refugees and host communities alike, and to facilitate post-arrival integration for those resettled or accessing complementary pathways. NGOs are watching with concern as UNHCR and other UN agencies are being stripped of resources and losing expertise because of funding crises. It is essential that governments work together to ensure that UNHCR remains strong and well-resourced, so that the organisation can continue its critically important work in protection and coordinating durable solutions. Ensuring UNHCR has the capacity to register and identify people in need of protection in line with needs is critical. Additionally, investing in refugee-led organisations in host countries can create linkages and support the assessment and identification of at-risk forcibly displaced persons in need of a durable solution.

4. Leverage expertise through cultivating trust-based partnerships

Leveraging expertise and cultivating strong, trust-based and equitable partnerships with local civil society organisations involved in supporting highly vulnerable populations can generate additional pathways to safety. There are excellent opportunities for greater collaboration with partners working on self-reliance activities in host countries, through educational opportunities, skills-building programs, and train-to-hire. It is important to include development actors, and the private sector both as employers and advocates, in developing self-reliance activities. We should be careful to approach these not just for their potential for third country solutions, but for their benefit for host communities. Many participants in such programs may choose not to pursue third country solutions but remain where they are. Furthermore, it is crucial to provide adequate funding to establish self-sustaining pathways, including by supporting NGOs engaged in these strategies.

5. Remove barriers to family reunification and other migration pathways

NGOs continue to call on both host and receiving states to implement all possible policy changes, administrative leniencies, and procedural flexibilities to support exit and entry of refugees on legal pathways, including through exit permits, visas and travel documents. It is imperative that barriers such as documentation requirements, limited embassy access, high costs, and other obstacles are addressed to facilitate the reunion of families, especially for unaccompanied and separated children.

Conclusion

Five years ago, this forum agreed on a 10-year vision of third country solutions for one million refugees through resettlement and two million refugees through other migration pathways. After the COVID pandemic, this goal was extended by two years to 2030. We know that much needs to be done to come close to achieving this collective goal and there are many obstacles, both political and practical.

However, we are encouraged by the impressive work being done by many to expand refugees' access to complementary pathways and by the tenacity of advocates who continue to press a positive case for expanding access to resettlement. As NGOs working across the world to respond to the impacts of forced displacement, we remain committed to working with states, international organisations, refugee communities and other actors to continue to push for more durable solutions for people forcibly displaced. We look forward to the next three days of sharing information and ideas, strengthening international partnerships, and inspiring each other to remain committed to this vital and life-changing work.