

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM STOCKTAKING AND NGO / CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATIONS

Outcome Report

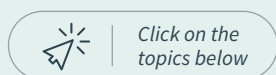


Photo: UNHCR / Jose Cendon

JULY 2021
UNHCR MENA BUREAU

Reflecting on progress made towards the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and taking stock of pledges submitted at the Global Refugee Forum

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Executive Summary

The MENA Global Refugee Forum Stocktaking and NGO/Civil Society Consultations took place on 20 – 21 April 2021, bringing together over 150 participants from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania; participants from regional organizations and multi-stakeholder partners. This dialogue with NGO and civil society partners was the second iteration of its kind following the first MENA NGO and Civil Society Consultations that took place in 2019 in the lead up to the Global Refugee Forum (GRF). The Consultations were also the first regional convening since the GRF to follow up on multi-stakeholder pledges and reflect collectively with partners on the progress made towards the operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in the region ahead of the **High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) in December 2021**. This included discussions on the practical ways in which actors are advancing the GCR and implementing GRF pledges, considering COVID-19, and considering the evolving challenges and opportunities on the ground.

The HLOM will be an opportunity to bring together government officials, humanitarian and development organizations, financial institutions, and other stakeholders in order to take stock of efforts towards easing the pressure on countries hosting large refugee populations; the extent to which refugees and host communities have been able to achieve self-reliance; review efforts needed to advance third-country solutions and assess efforts made and still needed towards the implementation of the GCR objectives and GRF pledges submitted in 2019.

Keynote addresses by Ms. Gillian Triggs, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, and Mr. Ayman Gharaibeh, UNHCR MENA Regional Director were facilitated by Shaden Khallaf, Senior Policy Advisor for MENA who set the stage for discussions on the **Global Compact on Refugees framework and the multi-stakeholder approach in MENA**, highlighting the importance of research and data collection and the need to develop a commonwealth of knowledge and research on displacement, as well as the pertinence of international support and the need for its expansion to low- and middle-income countries hosting large numbers of displaced persons and/or hosting populations of protracted displacement.

Participants investigated the issue of **partnerships and localization in humanitarian responses further and need for funding for local actors**, alongside partnerships, given the crucial role they play and knowledge they bring. Challenges in relation to the ability of local actors to access funding were highlighted.

This was subsequently linked to **partnerships for sustainable and inclusive responses in urban environments**, highlighting the need for innovative solutions, including to promote the socio-economic inclusion of displaced persons and host communities, as well as achieve gender equity and access to livelihood opportunities. Numerous best practices were shared in this session enabling positive exchange of experiences.

Faith-Based engagement in responding to displacement flagged the significant role FBOs play in facilitating social cohesion and addressing social tension, as well as their ability to reach communities which other humanitarian actors can hardly access, and their crucial role in advocating for more inclusive policies. Reference was made to the Zakat Fund as an important tool. Inclusion of women and youth was also highlighted as critical to inclusive policies.

Participants discussed the issue of **connecting with art and culture in displacement settings**, given the strong impact they have on changing the narrative on how refugees are viewed and portrayed, as well as serving as a tool to provide psycho-social support and create social cohesion. They echoed the vital role artists and cultural influencers play in responsibility-sharing towards displaced persons and host communities, noting that art can preserve the cultural identities and is a means to provide refugees and displaced persons with a voice and a face, raising awareness on relevant issues.

Updates on the Global Refugee Forum pledges was lastly provided, highlighting the achievements and challenges faced in operationalization especially given the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Background

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) provides a framework for equitable responsibility-sharing and finding durable solutions for displaced persons, emphasizing on the role of the international community in supporting host communities of large refugee populations.

The Global Compact on Refugees has four main objectives:

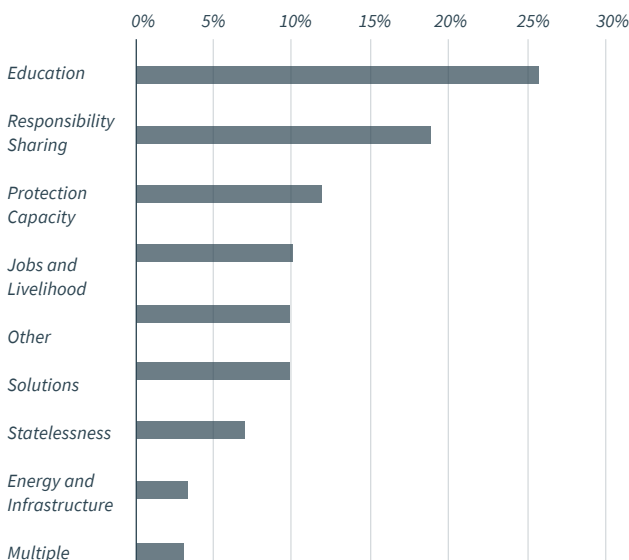
- 1. Ease the pressure on host communities.**
- 2. Enhance refugee self-reliance.**
- 3. Expand access to third-country solutions.**
- 4. Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.**

The Global Refugee Forum (GRF) is an opportunity for states and multi-stakeholders to come together every four years to share good practices, contribute with financial support, technical expertise, and policy changes to reach the goals of the GCR. The forum provides a platform for states and other stakeholders to make concrete pledges that could achieve tangible benefits to both refugees and host communities.

States, NGOs and Multi-stakeholders including private sector, faith-based organizations and academia submitted pledges to the MENA region, with states submitting the largest number of pledges with a total of 27 and NGOs submitting the second largest number with a total of 12 pledges.

In 2019, the first GRF was held to translate the principles of the GCR into concrete action plans and assert on the importance of a ‘whole of society’ approach in preventing, responding to, and solving refugee situations. The MENA region received 59 pledges from governments and multi-stakeholders as reflected in the graph below, with the highest being in the area of education with a total of 16 pledges, followed by responsibility sharing arrangements with 11 pledges, protection capacity with 7 pledges and jobs and livelihood with 6 pledges, same as solutions and others.

Area of Focus



Submitting Entity Type

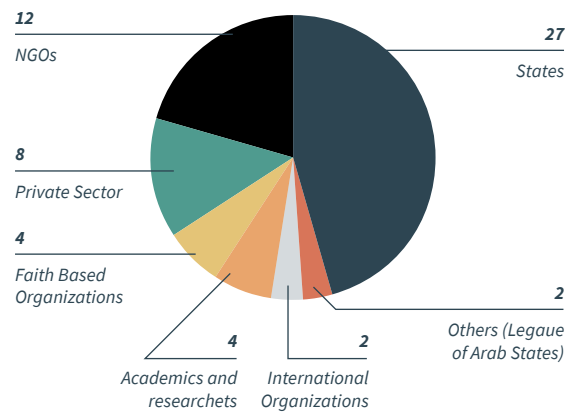


Figure 2
Pledging entities by type

Figure 1
Pledging entities by category for the MENA region

MENA Global Refugee Forum Stocktaking and NGO/Civil Society Consultations Opening Session

Keynote addresses for the Consultations were delivered by **Ms. Gillian Triggs, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, and Mr. Ayman Gharaibeh, UNHCR MENA Regional Director**, with the session moderated by Shaden Khallaf, Senior Policy Advisor for MENA.

“The objectives of this stocktaking event are to consider how to meet the challenge in this phase of pandemic, to push back against the deficit in solidarity, to show that the GCR and the pledges have proven to be an effective mechanism, and have enabled us all to respond to the pandemic and other emergencies that are going to arrive in the future.”

Gillian Triggs,
UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection



Ms. Gillian Triggs highlighted the importance of the GCR as a tool to respond in an emergency phase and to address the longer-term consequences of the COVID-19, noting that proof and evidence are needed to show that the Compact is working and that pledges are being implemented. To date, 3/4 of the pledges are being implemented, and 15% of which are fulfilled. Adding that inclusion is key considering the backdrop of low resettlement and voluntary repatriation number, and equally noting the 16 out of 19 countries in the MENA who have confirmed the inclusion of refugees in their national vaccination plans.



Mr. Ayman Gharaibeh highlighted that the MENA region remains characterized by volatility and instability caused by social, economic, political, demographic and cultural challenges, where the main displacement flows have been shaped over the past ten years by instability and conflict. Partnerships and a ‘whole of society’ multi-stakeholder approach thereby continue to be a critical pillar of UNHCR’s national and regional interventions, as well as engagement with civil society as they work closely with local communities and have awareness of the regional needs on the ground. The role of Islamic philanthropy in favor of refugees was also highlighted noting that last year, Zakat Fund generated 61 million USD globally. The World Bank also had an important role in providing evidence-based data on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in the region.

Mr. Gharaibeh and Ms. Triggs both highlighted the organizational priority of promoting partnerships which has only been heightened in the context of COVID-19 and economic downturn.

Thematic Discussions and Key Outcomes

A. THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES FRAMEWORK AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH IN MENA

Moderator

*Dr. Nasser Yassin, American University of Beirut
/ MENA Civil Society Network for Displacement*

Panellists

*Ms. Samah Hadid, Head of Middle East Advocacy,
Norwegian Refugee Council*

*Ms. Perveen Ali, Senior Policy Advisor,
GRF Coordination Team, UNHCR Geneva*

*Mr. Abdelbasset Ben Hassen, President,
Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR), Tunisia*

*Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO
Network for Development (ANND), Lebanon*

*Ms. Souzan Mohareb, Head of Aid Department and
CEO Deputy of Arab Renaissance for Democracy and
Development (ARDD), Jordan*

Inclusive policies are more important now than ever due to COVID-19, the inability for safe return to countries of origin and the protracted nature of displacement in the region. UNHCR has been working on a process of matching pledges aiming at bringing together key donor and host countries, where 80 potential matches have been identified. It is an important next step towards the implementation of the GCR and ensuring deliverables on the ground. Global financial pledges can be matched with policy pledges that work towards the inclusion and protection of displaced persons. Due to COVID-19 some pledging entities had to adapt their pledges to respond to the impacts of the pandemic. UNHCR is encouraging pledging entities to reflect on how their pledges can amplify and support the inclusion of refugees in host countries, while continuing to count on UNHCR support in adapting pledges to post COVID realities.

Figure 2
**Refugees develop
innovative clean energy
device at Zaatari Camp
in Jordan**

Photo: UNHCR / Lilly Carlisle



A. 1. Recommendations to advance country-level operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees

A. 1. 1. *Research and Data Collection*

- The important role of research centers was highlighted in creating new evidence-based narratives supported by local researchers to demonstrate the positive impact displaced persons can have when included in host communities and the importance of employing their skills to strengthen local economies. Such narrative is critical to countering the view of refugees as only a burden on the socio-economic environment and instability for the local communities - Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Lebanon.
- The development of a common wealth of knowledge and research on displacement was underscored as a pathway to strengthening the protection of refugees; advocating for legal frameworks and policies on displacement as well as raising awareness on displacement issues through evidence-based data – AIHR, Tunisia.
- Developing knowledge on displacement from a rights-based approach would have an impact on the following:
 - Redefining knowledge and information sharing in the region.
 - Emphasizing on the importance of producing knowledge in Arabic language.
 - Reflecting on the quality of education in the region; reflect on the human rights and the freedom of academia.
 - Finding solutions for displacement and sharing comprehensive inclusive best practices on the protection of refugee rights.

A. 1. 2. *International Support and Reflections on Funding*

- There is a need for merging short- and long-term objectives for programming and funding opportunities to strengthen the humanitarian-development approach in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and find durable solutions for displaced persons. For example, cash assistance and food aid need to be linked with the objectives of the SDGs which could lead to the inclusion of refugees in the local communities - ANND, Lebanon.
- There is a need to expand support from the international community to low- and middle-income countries hosting large numbers of displaced persons and/or hosting populations of protracted displacement, especially in light of difficulty of finding solutions. International solidarity not only needs to be through funding, but also to find political resolutions to conflicts in the region and support the local markets by facilitating the international trading of local products and removing taxing barriers on local products of developing countries. Moreover, the international community can support states that have large debts which is increasing the burden of hosting countries leading to a fragile economic structure - ANND, Lebanon.

A. 1. 3. *Partnerships*

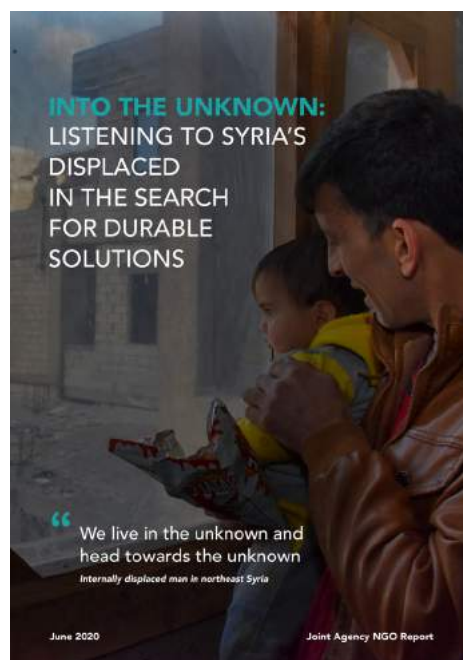
- The Global Compact provided a framework allowing for better coordination and partnership between different actors to respond to the pandemic including the government, donors, civil society, and local actors. However, more efforts are still needed to strengthen collaboration between the national authorities and civil society actors in response to COVID-19 and displacement – [Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development](#) (ARDD), Jordan.
- More joint efforts for advocacy are encouraged to identify priorities and provide evidence on the needs of vulnerable groups; promote solidarity and responsibility-sharing towards displacement. There is a need to increase investment in localization and the Grand Bargain commitment to build the capacity of local actors and encourage them to adopt the Global Compact principles in their operations – ARDD, Jordan.

A. 1. 4. Inclusion

- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) shared their working strategy in implementing the principles of the Global Compact on the ground through the following main points:
 - Adopting a rights-based programming approach through delivering information, counselling and legal assistance for refugees and internally displaced persons.
 - Developing housing, land, and property rights projects to assist returnees with information, services, and tools to better prepare them for short- and long-term solutions.
 - Increasing access to civil documentation for displaced persons and promoting programming that supports self-reliance of refugees and displaced persons. For example, NRC worked with partners in Lebanon to produce data and analysis on cash assistance programming which had an impact on enhancing dignity and self-reliance.
- Raising awareness of donors and humanitarian actors on the barriers of durable solutions for displaced persons through research and monitoring the conditions for returnees in Syria to reduce forced returns of refugees to unsafe areas.
- Supporting research on returnees to better understand the preference and intentions of refugees.
- Donors, host governments and operational actors need to work on including the perspective of displaced persons within the humanitarian-development planning and durable solutions strategies. Women, youth, persons with disabilities and marginalized persons need to be included in the decision-making, planning and implementation processes. Longer term funding and programming are essential to improve the economic conditions inside Syria to support returnees – NRC MENA.

A. 2. Best Practices

- ARDD established the [Jordanian National NGO Forum \(JONAF\)](#), a locally led coalition for advocacy, to build synergies and rapid responses to affected populations in the future. JONAF reached more than 130,000 vulnerable people in response to COVID-19, and their efforts continue in 2021. Read [more](#).
- ARDD commended the partnership and efforts of the Jordanian government in response to COVID-19 through the distribution of aid and food parcels, creating referral system for refugees and host communities, and facilitating the movement and access of local partners on the ground.
- In 2020, the [Issam Fares Institute](#) conducted the research report Dynamics of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon's Agriculture Sector analysing the impact of Syrian refugee on the agriculture sector in Lebanon, more about it [here](#).
- Into the Unknown research report was published in collaboration with partners on 50 Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons analysing their preferences and views on return. Further details can be found [here](#).



B. LOCALIZATION AND PARTNERSHIPS DYNAMICS IN REFUGEE RESPONSES

Moderator

Ms. Eman Ismail, Regional Representative and Focal Point on Localisation, ICVA MENA

Panellists

Mr. Ahmed Makhoul, Head of Migration Department, Libyan Red Crescent, Libya

Ms. Rachel Bernu, Regional Advocacy Coordinator, Danish Refugee Council

Ms. Virginie Lefèvre, Programmes and Partnerships Coordinator, Amel Association, Lebanon

Mr. Fathi Abdel Hameed, Sudanese Outreach Volunteer, Lebanon

Ms. Manal Al Wazani, CEO of Durrat al Manal and Steering Committee Member, NGO Fora-JONAF, Jordan

COVID-19 highlighted the critical importance of localized responses in refugee settings, as embedded in the GCR and GRF. Working with and investing in local actors as equal and strategic partners is a vital element for strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian assistance by recognizing the dignity and security of people in need. This discussion was timely in light of the preparations for the Grand Bargain II which focuses on strengthening the role of local actors. Despite the many challenges posed by COVID-19, technology allowed local actors to be more engaged in regional and global level discussions on localization.

“The pandemic has highlighted how much more we need to work on solidarity. Solidarity is the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees. Money can help but it cannot fix every problem and so we as UNHCR are striving to promote partnerships.”

Ayman Gharaibeh, UNHCR Regional Director for MENA

B.1. Recommendations on Strengthening Localization

B. 1. 1. Localization in MENA

- It is imperative not to classify the whole of MENA under one definition, as each country context is different particularly in Lebanon given the new crises that the country is facing in comparison to other countries – [Amel Association](#), Lebanon.
- [The Libyan Red Crescent](#) (LRC) highlighted the importance of abiding by the humanitarian principle of neutrality in conflict zones. LRC also noted the need to be mindful of funds received, with a view to maintain neutrality and for it to continue to provide aid to people of concern through cash assistance and food items.

B. 1. 2. Funding

- There is a need to increase access of local actors to funding opportunities and to track the global efforts for strengthening localization and empowerment, potentially through tracking and monitoring funding in terms of frequency and scale. Even though there is a clear nationalization and localization strategy propelled by both donors and international partners including UNHCR, the obstacle remains that there are no clear estimates of how much funding effectively goes to local national NGOs through their partnerships with international actors. Therefore, there is a need for transparency in sharing information on funding that is being channeled to local actors to monitor the practical implementation of strengthening localization – [Amel Association](#), Lebanon.
- In line with the Grand Bargain, [Danish Refugee Council \(DRC\) MENA](#) recommended that INGOs invest in longer-term funding for programmatic and strategic engagement that promotes an integrated response. Donors need to start funding strategic long-term programs and projects that supports the work and partnerships with local actors. There is also a need to track the funding that is mobilized through the [Grand Bargain](#).

B. 1. 3. Power Dynamics

- International actors need to adopt a complementarity approach rather than an individual agency approach to increase the impact of humanitarian intervention, advocacy and benefit to refugees and host communities. Power dynamics on the global, regional, and national levels play a key role in localization and the empowerment of local actors. Accordingly, it is essential to include local actors in the process of decision making and programming, as well as providing financing opportunities to strengthen localization – Amel Association, Lebanon.

B. 1. 4. Partnerships

- The role of local actors was emphasized as first and last responders to humanitarian crises and the importance of partnerships between local actors and INGOs was highlighted to gain more access to funding and build capacities of local NGOs and expand the outreach to persons of concern – [Durrat Al Manal](#), Jordan.
- LRC echoed the importance of partnerships with INGOs and local actors and the inclusion of youth while building their capacities. Due to the increasing interest of youth in volunteerism with civil society organizations in Libya, there is a need for training programs and capacity building to strengthen their expertise and skills and increase their engagement in operational response.
- Agreements like the Grand Bargain are shifting the focus on strengthening partnerships between INGOs and local NGOs and highlighting the importance of partnerships, which leads to better service provision and resource mobilization to both refugees and host communities.

B. 2. Best Practices

- In Lebanon, in line with the nationalization and localization strategy advanced by donors and international partners including UNHCR, a five-years joint strategy for localization is being discussed, which includes two national organizations that are sector co-leading and thereby contribute to meaningful participation of local actors.
- In Libya, new measures were followed to protect the health and safety of community volunteers when providing aid and services to the local communities in line with the COVID-19 prevention plans and social distancing recommendations.

Mr. Fathi Abdel Hameed, Sudanese Outreach Volunteer in Lebanon highlighted the significant role refugees play in supporting refugees and host communities as community volunteers and first responders. Mr Fathi provided services through his work with Amel Association including (a) the provision of meals and assistance to refugees and citizens affected by the explosion in Beirut as well as overseeing their transmission to nearby health facilities, and (b) provision of psycho-social support targeting refugees and (c) work on awareness campaigns and projects to ensure refugees' access to healthcare.

B. 3. Challenges

- COVID-19 forced local actors to shift their operations and priorities to responding almost exclusively to the impact of the pandemic, as well as cut their costs due to a lack of funding, rather than responding to ongoing crises.
- There is an increased access barrier to direct funding for local partners, and instead local actors receive their funding through INGOs. Moreover, there is insufficient data on tracking funds dedicated to local national NGOs through their partnerships with international actors to monitor international efforts to advance localization.
- Despite the rising interest in localization, local actors are not having a meaningful presence and coordination spaces in the regional and global spheres in terms of planning, monitoring, evaluation, and funding.
- INGOs were faced with challenges to protect local partnerships due to the diminished funding opportunities impacted by COVID-19.
- Contributions often tend to fund short-term operations that provide immediate assistance, rather than supporting long term strategic planning and programming.
- In conflict-torn countries, local actors face difficulties in maintaining their neutrality when receiving funding from one of the conflicting parties.

C. PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE RESPONSES IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Moderator

Ms. Carol El Sayed, Community-Based Protection Officer, UNHCR Lebanon

Panellists

Mr. Faisal Tahir Mohamed Saeed, Association Vivre Ensemble pour la Citoyennete et le Developpement, Morocco

Mr. Hisham El Gazzar, Chairman and CEO of Yadawee, Egypt

Mr. Abou Malick Diaw, Director of the National Union of Savings and Credit Unions, Djiké, Mauritania

Ms. Enaam Barrishi, Director General, Jordan River Foundation, Jordan

Ms. Chema Gargouri, President, Tunisian Association for Management and Social Stability, Tunisia

As the region hosts millions of refugees living in protracted displacement in urban settings, innovative and inclusive solutions are sought to promote the socio-economic inclusion of displaced persons and host communities, as well as achieve gender equity and access to livelihood opportunities. Partnership between key actors including entrepreneurs, NGOs, Refugee-led Organizations, and the private sector is an important response strategy in the region, which can promote the objectives of the GCR including on equal responsibility sharing and finding durable solutions for displaced persons. The international community has a role in supporting low- and middle-income countries hosting a large number of displaced persons, especially in MENA where protracted displacement is common. Private sector has a vital role in development due to its flexibility in times of crisis, outreach to local communities, providing technical skills and independence to refugees through entrepreneurship. Sustainability and capacity-building are also crucial for small enterprises which can be maintained through a multi-stakeholder approach that could guarantee the skills, resources and mobilization needed.

C. 1. Recommendations for Providing Sustainability and Inclusive Responses

C. 1. 1. Humanitarian-Development Nexus

- It is essential to develop the humanitarian-development nexus through merging short- and long-term objectives in planning and programming which can support the sustainable development goals and aim at finding durable solutions for displaced persons.

C. 1. 3. Inclusion and Capacity Building

- The importance of the financial inclusion of refugees was highlighted through states' efforts in including refugees and displaced persons in the national systems and livelihood programs.
- Building leadership skills of refugees, increasing youth participation and community building are important factors to promote social cohesion and tolerance between refugees and the host communities in Morocco. Building leadership skills benefits refugees not only in terms of their career paths, but it also equips them with the self-confidence required to shape their identity which eases their integration with the locals.
- Supporting refugee women through partnerships between private sector, financial institutions, and multi-stakeholders is important to build their capacities, increase awareness, and provide them with technical support. Despite the challenges of COVID-19 faced by Refugee-led Organizations, there were many opportunities for economic gain through teleworking, mass production, and giving access to livelihood, especially to refugee women.

C. 1. 2. Partnerships and Funding

- The importance of close cooperation between the private sector and international organisations was highlighted for the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees – Yadawee, Egypt.
- Building trust between donors and local actors and increasing partnerships between the private sector and INGOs are essential to provide sustainable development for local communities through a gender-sensitive lens to achieve equitable access to livelihood opportunities – [Jordan River Foundation \(JRF\)](#), Jordan.
- In order to maintain operations during the COVID-19 pandemic induced lockdown, flexibility, commitment, and persistence were key aspects.



Figure 3
UNHCR's MADE51 initiative helps Syrian refugee earn living by making toys in Turkey

Photo: UNHCR / Emrah Gurel

C. 2. Best Practices

- Yadawee's fast paced response and its ability to cater to the market by shifting the focus of refugees' production to the manufacturing of face masks to maintain a source of income while meeting the market demands during COVID-19. This highlights the vital role that private sector plays in connecting refugees to the market needs both globally and locally. Yadawee facilitated research on the market to adapt to the changing needs of the market.

- Refugee women achieved financial sustainability as entrepreneurs after concluding their training with Yadawee for handicrafts in Egypt. As part of the project, refugees received skills and management training. This included technical training in the craft skills necessary to make the products, but also capacity building, new product development, how to run social media campaigns, and how to prepare catalogues and photo-shoots. The aim of the training was to help refugees become financially independent entrepreneurs who are equally capable of starting their own sustainable business.

- Abou Malick Diaw, Director of the National Union of Savings and Credit Unions, Djikké commended the government's pledge to enrol all refugees with civil registry, issue them with national identification numbers, secure national identification cards and allow their inclusion in national systems. It was highlighted that this decision marks recognition of the government to the rights of refugees and displaced people and facilitates the inclusion of refugees into the socioeconomic spheres and reflects financial inclusion, whereby ID cards enabled refugees and displaced people in both urban and peripheral spheres to access the financial services in the country.

- Jordan River Foundation partnership with IKEA provided a local perspective to facilitate flexible working conditions for refugee women according to their culture and social norms. JRF discussed with IKEA to enable refugee women to work from home and sustain their income despite it being against IKEA's compliance standards. Women were provided with the necessary tools and materials and maintained their livelihood income through working on products from home.

- The JRF experience and quick adaptation of their pledge to COVID-19 was fivefold:

1. Ensuring a solution where everyone benefits and for both partners and NGOs to guarantee a sustainable long-term partnership. In doing so, JRF ensured the provision of high-quality products for IKEA to sell.

2. Shifting the narrative of the Syrian crisis from a burden to a development opportunity. This aided JRF in developing a strategy that is sustainable in the long term.

3. Due to the lack of financial and human resources, JRF would not have been able to carry out two different projects aiding refugees and the displaced on one hand and local citizens. JRF advocated for their services to be equally provided for both Jordanians and refugees.

4. Building a trusting relationship with partners and donors that could sustain itself during times of emergencies such as the pandemic. This was done by JRF's commitment to deliver on their services and ensuring the provision of an added value for its partners.

5. The need for a holistic humanitarian assistance approach. Refugees need to be looked at in relation to their environment considering the traumatic experiences they have gone through. To address this challenge, JRF ensured the provision of basic services such as psychosocial, educational, emotional and protection support.

- [Made51](#) platform bringing together refugee made products to the global market to sustain their livelihood.

C. 3. Challenges

- Yadawee's programs were impacted by COVID-19 in terms of facing challenges on exports, the main source of the company's income, as well as tourism, the second source of income. This strained the stream of production on the company and challenged efficient refugee response.

- Chema Gargouri, President of Tunisian Association for Management and Social Stability (TAMSS) underscored the need for more comprehensive legal frameworks protecting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia as a challenge organizations face in trying to place refugees and asylum seekers in the formal sector. Refugees and asylum seekers are forced to work in the informal sector which hinders their socioeconomic inclusion and places them under strenuous conditions.

D. FAITH-BASED ACTORS ENGAGEMENT IN RESPONSE TO DISPLACEMENT

Moderator

*Ms. Raefah Makki, Campaign and Advocacy Officer,
UNHCR, UAE*

Panellists

*Ms. Ana Maria Daou, Head of Research, Adyan
Foundation, Lebanon*

*Ms. Latifa Ibn Ziaten, Activist and Founder of IMAD
Association, Morocco*

*Mr. Fadi Nasr, Community Center Manager and
Livelihoods Officer, Orthodox Youth Movement,
Lebanon and Syria*

*Mr. Jamal Abdul-Khaleq Abdullah Al Nouri,
Chairman, Kuwait Society for Relief and
Sheikh Abdullah Al Nouri Charity Society, Kuwait*

*Dr. Mohamed Wardany, Assistant Professor and
Director of the Media Center, Al Azhar Islamic
Research Academy, Egypt*

*Ms. Maya Marissa Malek, Managing Director and CEO,
Amanie Advisors, UAE*

In many crisis situations, Faith-based actors act as first responders to displaced persons and local communities, and also play a significant role in facilitating social cohesion and addressing social tensions. They can reach communities that other humanitarian actors can hardly access and can play a role in advocating for more inclusive policies. Moreover, the Islamic Social Finance (ISF) could become a critical fundraising channel for humanitarian and development operations that can benefit both refugees and the host communities. Fatwas have increasingly been considered as a mechanism to advocate for social cohesion and encourage donations through the [Zakat Fund](#) and other Islamic financial funds.

D. 1. Recommendations on the Engagement of Faith-based Actors in Response to Displacement

D. 1. 1. Advocacy

• The need for governments and institutions to assume their shared responsibility and advocate for inclusive policies was highlighted, in line with the Global Compact, through adopting a whole of society approach that ensures the implementation of inclusive policies in areas such as Education, Research Training, Community Engagement, Protection of Rights and Freedom, including Freedom of Religion and Belief and Media to minorities and vulnerable communities including refugees and asylum seekers. Even though governments bear the primary responsibility, civil society, faith-based actors and other stakeholders play a vital role in advocating for the inclusive policies. This was based on the foundation's experience in Lebanon where there have been many attempts by both governments,

international and local organizations to promote inclusive policies. Considering that such processes are reciprocal, and time consuming, it was advised that there is a need for concerted efforts from all actors in the community – [Adyan Foundation](#), Lebanon.

• Women and youth need to be included during the initial discussions of developing inclusive policies to maintain a gender and age perspectives. There is a need to dignify and empower youth refugees to become producers and agents of change who are part of the solution to some of the economic problems in MENA, rather than beneficiaries of aid – Orthodox Youth Movement, Lebanon and Syria.

D. 1. 2. Operational Response

- Better governance of finance tools is needed to facilitate the collection of donations during turbulent times such as the pandemic. For example, while Zakat and Sadaqa are often used for urgent relief, other ISF tools may not be. Therefore, there is a need to reprioritize expenses and use different formulas for diverse needs - [Kuwait Society for Relief](#) and [Sheikh Abdullah Al Nouri Charity Society](#), Kuwait.
- The complementarity between the GCR objectives and Islamic Social Finance was emphasized in terms of enhancing social welfare, increasing security and social cohesion in the community, and creating self-sufficiency as well as financial independence through the provision of services such as education and healthcare. To scale up ISF contributions and enhance their impacts, there needs to be a link between ISF tools with financial products on the

ground, such as Sukuk, crowdfunding and microfinancing. In so doing, these tools will be better governed by consistent policies and regulations, they will also work under a more transparent framework and will be able to incorporate technology which will consequently contribute to more effective humanitarian response – [Amaine Advisors](#), UAE.

- Since Islamic Financial Institutions have a structure that has been providing support through micro financing and climate action, it was suggested that Islamic Financial Institutions should be encouraged to submit a pledge dedicated to supporting refugees and host communities through micro financing to secure sustainable financial independence among people of concern – [Amaine Advisors](#), UAE.

D. 2. Best Practices

- COVID-19 facilitated information sharing and best practices through the use of technology across countries and between different stakeholders. [Kuwait Society for Relief](#) and [Sheikh Abdullah Al Nouri Charity Society](#) reached out to their beneficiaries through mobile and ATMs during the pandemic.

• [#30DaysOfKindness](#) initiative was launched in collaboration between UNHCR and Al Azhar in December 2020. It called upon the humanitarian and religious figures in the region and globally to support and advocate for individuals and families who require basic needs and encourages communities to take the initiative to help IDPs, refugees and all vulnerable communities, and covered four pillars namely: shelter, job opportunities, clothing, and food.

- In Lebanon, the situation of refugees worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the deteriorating economic situation. Both refugees and host community were facing difficulties to adapt. Local stakeholders have intervened and had an important role when there was minimal or no intervention from the government. Their role was vital in the provision of psychosocial and economic support, education, and promotion of diversity through dialogues.



**Young Syrian gets help with PTSD
in aftermath of Beirut blast**

Photo: UNHCR Lebanon/Diego Ibarra Sanchez

E. CONNECTING WITH ART AND CULTURE IN DISPLACEMENT SETTINGS

Moderator

Ms. Lina Attel, The National Center for Culture and Performing Arts / King Hussein Foundation, Jordan

Panellists

Ms. Sheikha Bibi Al Sabah, Chairperson, Beit al Sadu, Kuwait

Mr. Lotfi Bouchnak, Singer, Tunisia

Mr. Hisham Abkari, Director of the Mohammed V Theatre, Morocco

Mr. Sinan Sweis, Director, Jabal Amman Publishers, Jordan

Ms. Enji Jarrouj, Author, Syrian refugee residing in the UK

Art and Culture have a strong impact on changing the narrative on how refugees are viewed and portrayed, as well as serving as a tool to provide psycho-social support and create social cohesion. Artists and cultural influencers have a vital role to play in responsibility-sharing towards displaced persons and host communities. Moreover, through the engagement of art and culture, refugee artists can have a platform to discover and explore their talents. Art can preserve the cultural identities of traditional nomadic weaving including the identity of refugees who come from such cultures. Art is a means to provide refugees and displaced persons with a voice and a face. It has an important role in changing the narrative on refugees and displaced persons to active participants in their local host communities and part of the economic and social spheres. Storytelling can also have a strong impact on raising awareness on displacement and advocate for the rights of displaced persons.



Figure 4
Syrian refugees create mosaics as part of a livelihood training initiative at the Agamy Community Centre near Alexandria, Egypt

Photo: UNHCR / Scott Nelson

E. 1. Recommendations on the Role of Art and Culture in Response to Displacement

- Reflecting on the joint collaboration between [Jabal Amman Publishers](#), UNHCR and [Shoman Foundation](#) in publishing the Blue Birds book, the importance of partnerships and a multi-stakeholder approach was emphasized in supporting refugee artists and cultural influencers at a larger scale and achieving responsibility-sharing in empowering refugees and displaced persons such as the case with Blue Birds book with the aim of changing the narrative around refugees as well as advocating and raising awareness about their experiences – Jabal Amman Publishers, Jordan.
- There is a need for shifting the narrative on refugees and acknowledging their contribution as a community which can contribute to the economic and social landscape of their host country, including through employment and self-reliance.
- The influential role of media outlets was highlighting especially in terms of raising awareness, advocating for the rights of refugees and displaced persons, and promoting for equal responsibility-sharing and durable solutions for refugees in protracted displacement – Lotfi Bouchnak, Tunisia.
- Writing can be a powerful tool for communication that bridges the gap between refugees and host communities through addressing misconceptions on the experiences of the war and refugees as well as raising awareness on how to address the challenges of displacement through finding durable solutions that can benefit both refugees and host communities – Engy Jarrouj, UK.

“Music and Art can transcend a thousand speeches in advocating for refugees.”

Lotfi Bouchnak, Singer

“Cultural identity is essential in the area of globalization and this kind of work (woven textile) helps people get back to their roots.”

Lina Attel, [The National Center for Culture and Performing Arts](#), Jordan

E. 2. Best Practices

- In line, with the GCR and the inclusion of refugees, the government of Morocco has established legislative frameworks to include refugee artists in livelihood opportunities in the art sector. The framework includes article 516 which allows both the private and the public to employ refugees and displaced persons and give them access to cultural and artistic services.
- Amal project is a collaboration between UNHCR MENA, Jabal Amman Publishers in Jordan and a team of mental health professionals, script and story writers, artists, illustrators, producers, and animators. It produced a series of books and animation aimed at developing coping skills among children who have either experienced traumatic events or suffer from anxiety and depression as a result of the ongoing stress of living in protracted displacement. The first pilot was launched by the end of 2020 and the study was conducted on displaced children in Egypt and Iraq.
- Following up to the first regional roundtable on the role of Art and Culture in addressing displacement and in consultations with network members, artists, cultural influencers, and UNHCR country operations, participants from 14 countries worked together to design an audio-

visual collaborative project that combines different forms of artistic and cultural expressions with the background themes of resilience, solidarity, and inclusion of refugees, who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, and who are already facing severe short and long term socio-economic strain.

- Blue Birds book was published by Jabal Amman Publishers in collaboration with UNHCR in early 2021. Blue Birds is a story of hope written by Engy Jarrouj at the age of sixteen, from a child’s viewpoint, expressing the anguish of Syrian children that is rarely reflected through news and correspondents’ and analysts’ reports. Engy Jarrouj is a Syrian refugee who fled Syria and is currently studying in England. The story is based on real life events, some of which she experienced and others from the experiences of her family and friends, detailing experiences of war and escape and the process of receiving counselling and mental health support.



Figure 5
Blue Birds Book
Jabal Amman Publishers in
collaboration with UNHCR



Global Refugee Forum Pledge Updates

A. 1. Adyan Foundation - Pledges of Faith-Based Organizations in MENA towards Asylum and Displacement for the Global Refugee Forum states the following:

1. Faith-based organizations and religious institutions should contribute, given their social and religious responsibility, to the elaboration of an honest description of the reality of the asylum situation – taking into consideration its root causes and consequences – in such a way that this narrative is built upon human dignity and the common humanitarian factors.

2. Faith-based organizations and religious institutions should build an alliance to protect human dignity with the main concern being to develop sustainable public policies away from ideological, sectarian,

and confessional approaches that create fear and intimidation from the other.

3. Faith-based organizations and religious institutions should enhance cooperation with academic institutions and civil society organizations to address concerns and find common grounds for values and common interests.

4. Faith-based organizations and religious institutions should develop narratives based on the principle of shared responsibility between refugees and displaced persons and their host communities.

A. 2. Pledge Updates:

1. Adyan Foundation has been developing and implementing Religious Social Responsibility, which is primarily based on two pillars:

a. The importance of consolidating religious discourse with action on the ground, in order to find the balance between what is being said by religious leaders and what is being implemented.

b. the necessity for international organizations and governments to realize the importance of FBOs and faith leaders in responding to the local communities including refugees.

2. In 2019, Adyan Foundation launched the first forum focusing on religious social responsibility, where 100 participants joined including community leaders, educators, media, activists from all over Lebanon. The forum was able to consolidate the narratives with action. Members were encouraged to implement their social projects and support members of the community including refugees. The objectives of the forum were:

a. To disseminate an inclusive, non-divisive narrative that is based on the common values of these organizations, which promotes diversity, dignity, and humanity, as well as respect for each other.

b. To counter violence and extremism especially towards refugees in Lebanon and abroad, which has been on the rise during the past years.




Photo: The National Conference for the Religious Social Responsibility Forum 2020 by Adyan Foundation

Figure 6
The National
Conference for the
Religious Social
Responsibility
Forum 2020 by
Adyan Foundation

3. In 2020, the second forum for Religious Social Stability was convened under the title #TogetherWeRiseWithOurCountry as the first nationwide event bringing together 300 participants from different Lebanese regions and religious backgrounds.
4. Non-Lebanese members including Palestinians and Syrians have been advocating for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Lebanon.
5. In response to COVID-19, members have been supporting refugees within the framework of the forum, with after-school activities and training centres providing workshops on entrepreneurship, awareness campaign in refugee camps.
6. The pledge calls for FBOs and religious institutions to build an alliance and develop policies that do not create fear and intimidation from the other (details of the pledges above):
 - a. Due to the different background of the members in the forum and their belonging to different institutions – religious or non-religious, the collaboration needs to be cross-confessional.
 - b. The focus of the forum, therefore, goes beyond an interfaith dialogue, to also include policymaking, education, solidarity, the promotion of positive narratives on social media.
 - c. Through this multi-level approach, FBOs and faith actors were able to promote sustainable policies and diversity.
7. The pledge calls for cooperation between FBOs and religious institutions with academic institutions and civil society organizations.
 - a. The Alwan programme (“Alwan” is the Arabic word for colours) launched by Adyan since 2007 involves 50 private schools in Lebanon which promote the concept of education through coexisting. Through this programme, students – many of which are refugees – learn about diversity, identity as well as working together on community service activities. Adyan has also been working with elementary school, to promote diversity in education.
 - b. “We stand with Beirut” campaign was launched by Adyan as a humanitarian response to the Beirut blast in August 2020. It brought together multiple stakeholders, including religious leaders and institutions who stood ready to implement initiatives such as psychosocial support, house repair, small business rehabilitation, provision of food and essential supplies, & education. The programme managed to reach 3,000 people of concern, many of whom are refugees who lost their homes.
 8. The pledge stresses that FBOs and religious institutions should develop narratives based on principle of shared responsibility.
 - a. Adyan ensures that all of their messaging on social media and other platforms are inclusive, and that they highlight shared responsibility between all components in the society, including governments, civil society, businesses, religious institutions, & host communities.

B. 1. Orthodox Youth Movement Pledge in Lebanon and Syria states the following:

1. Raise awareness in our community and churches on acceptance of others and dire help people need by refugees as children of God, where our duty as Christians is to host and help.
2. Make use of the presence of the one church shared in many nations. Use the existing channels of communications and create a web of neighbouring communities in different countries. Parishes speaking to Parishes and lending a hand while in need.
3. Use the commodities/culture from today’s world to reach refugee, host community, youth, and engage them in loving and accepting through art, movies, food, social issues, as they face similar hardships and interests. Spread the message of kindness, humanity, comfort, and love to overcome harsh life events.
4. Social cohesion programs have been highly successful. Engaging youth from diverse backgrounds and religions create channels of communication which lead to acceptance. More programs to join people in workshops that let them voice their fears and dreams are needed to help connect, cope, and heal.
5. Encouraging volunteering and community work such as gathering food, clothes, dedicating time to provide after school learning allows refugees and host communities to gather and communicate.

B. 2. Pledge Updates:

1. In Syria and Lebanon, MHPSS were provided to local communities and included women and youth, with the support of Syrian volunteers.
 2. Refugees were active partners and supported the Orthodox Youth Movement as community volunteers in responding to the pandemic and to the Beirut blast.
-

C. 1. Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR) Pledge Dedicating Cash Assistance to Eligible Displaced Families in Yemen and Iraq states the following:

1. The Kuwait Society for Relief has decided to sign a grant agreement with UNHCR dedicated 1,000,000 USD towards cash assistance for refugees and internally displaced person in Yemen to cover their basic needs.
 2. Along with 333,000 USD cash assistance towards refugees and internally displaced person in Iraq also covering their basic needs.
 3. The IDPs in Yemen will add up to 4,472 families & the IDPs in Iraq will add up to 763 families.
-

C. 2. Pledge Updates:

1. Due to the currency difference and low exchange rates, the number of displaced persons decreased to 4,000 families. The persons of concern used the cash assistance for shelter, food items, and medicine. KSR reached out to their people of concern through mobile and ATM during the pandemic. Some IDPs received cash assistance from the UNHCR Zakat Fund. Moreover, WASH services were also provided in Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan.
 2. In November 2020, after having raised donations, the KSR realized the need of differentiating between different types of funds – Zakat, Sadaqah, Waqaf, etc.
 3. Partnership with UNHCR is important to expand outreach and information sharing.
-

D. 1. Jordan River Foundation Pledge Investing in a Better Life for Refugees – Inter IKEA Group states:

400% volume / sales of IKEA textile range made by refugees and local women in Jordan, therefore we will contribute to sustainable livelihoods for 400 women. By 2022, we will have both global single articles and collections co-produced by Jordan River Foundation in Jordan. It will create sustainable livelihoods for over 400 refugees and local woman in Jordan from end 2020 onwards. Range & Supply is in exploration phase to find new partners to produce new ranges made by refugees in other countries. We will increase the number of IKEA touchpoints that sell the products and engage emotionally with our consumers and co-workers through storytelling, creating awareness and engagement.

D. 2. Pledge Updates:

Jordan River Foundation is expanding its outreach and is aiming at employing 600 women by the end of 2021 which is exceeding the target initially pledged for.

E. 1. NRC Pledges for the Middle East region states that:

NRC will deliver innovative projects to promote durable solutions for displaced people. This will be operationalised through among others more integrated programme approaches and the use of various cash modalities. NRC will assist those who want to return throughout their journey. A regional approach involving our country offices in Syria and Iraq and countries which are hosting large numbers of refugees, i.e. Lebanon, Jordan will be key. NRC will invest more in partnerships to be better able to effectively

implement its programmes. This includes academia, private sector, local and national authorities, and civil society. Recognising the importance of duty-of-care (DoC), NRC will continue supporting local partners to strengthen their capacity in this area. Recognising that conflict will continue across the region, it is important that NRC maintains its ability to respond in emergencies. NRC will therefore continue to invest in emergency response capacity to ensure that we can be quickly on the ground in critical situations.

E. 2. Pledge Updates:

- Developed housing, land, and property rights projects to assist returnees with information, services, and tools to better prepare them for short- and long-term solutions.
- Increased access to civil documentation for displaced persons and promoted programming that supports self-reliance of refugees and displaced persons; NRC worked with partners in Lebanon to produce data and analysis on cash assistance programming which had an impact on enhancing dignity and self-reliance.

- Supported research on returnees to better understand the preference and intentions of refugees. [Into the Unknown](#) research report was published in collaboration with partners on 50 Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons analysing their preferences and views.

F. 1. DRC's Pledge under the Poverty Alleviation Coalition states that:

The DRC pledges to explore the relevance and feasibility of implementing poverty alleviation programming – using the Graduation Approach – across all its countries of operations, with an initial focus on the Middle East and West Africa. In countries where the approach is deemed feasible, DRC will raise and mobilise internal and external resources and invest in capacity building to ensure delivery of quality programming at scale. The DRC will work as part of the

“Poverty Alleviation Coalition” and in close collaboration with the convening partners, UNHCR and World Bank, as well as the 12 INGOs. Furthermore, DRC commits to generating and sharing learning on the attributes of successful poverty alleviation programming in displacement contexts to support refugee responses, advance the objectives of the GCR, and promote long-term resilience.

G. AIHR's Pledge for the MENA Academic Journal and Digital Platform for Displacement states that

MENA Academic Journal and Digital Platform for Displacement is an annual peer-reviewed journal issued by the Arab Institute for Human Rights, which publishes articles, testimonies, and reviews of books on the Middle East, North Africa and neighbouring regions in Arabic in order to draw on comparative experiences on public policies and the need to understand refugee pathways. The journal publishes interdisciplinary research in a variety of topics: law, political sciences, and all fields of human and social sciences as well as literature. The journal adopts the principle of free access to knowledge in all parts of the world, through a digital and paper publication. It ensures of

course the rights to publishers and authors through clear mentions. The Arab Journal of Displacement and Asylum aims to: Publish original, distinguished and Arabic-speaking research; Enriching knowledge about the displaced and refugees in the Middle East and North Africa region through the concerted efforts of academics and civil society actors; Knowledge production on critical issues for the region; Policy analysis and monitoring of best practices in dealing with issues of forced displacement and asylum; Influencing the public narrative on the displaced and refugees and presenting alternatives to change stereotypes and to promote social cohesion.

Way Forward

Overall, there is a long cultural and historical legacy of asylum, and countries in the region continue to host millions of refugees and displaced persons, despite complex local and regional dynamics, protracted conflicts, and evolving socio-economic challenges especially with the repercussions of COVID-19. Much support has been received over the years, yet, the needs still outpace the resources available, and longer-term solutions are required. Reinforcing impactful partnerships with development partners and linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals, including the World Bank is crucial, with a view to shape public discourse and to help influence favourable public policies. There has been substantive progress on a whole of society approach in the region, including additional emphasis and resourcing for multi-stakeholder engagement, and accelerating local stakeholders' participation in the design thinking, as well as operational management of refugee situations. The GCR and GRF have reiterated the need for continued solidarity and responsibility sharing and active identification of matching opportunities for the commitments and policy pledges made at the first GRF will be necessary to meaningfully demonstrate continued support to countries hosting large numbers of refugees.

During the discussions it was agreed that further consultations with partners would continue regarding the follow-up to pledges made, together with UNHCR country offices, in order to provide further technical and material support. Most critically, a more granular understanding of the parameters of the pledges will lead to better matching of policy pledges with financial resources and overall strategic directions. It was noted that the depth and breadth and innovation of the space for protection and solutions in MENA has been pioneering in many ways, and that a higher number of submissions of pledges and good practices would more proportionately reflect the extraordinary efforts exerted by multistakeholder partners in the region in the interest of refugees and their hosts.

The outcomes of the consultations will feed into preparatory analysis ahead of the High-Level Officials Meeting taking place in December 2021 in Geneva. Coupled with the outcomes of the Third MENA Academic Roundtable, this year on Climate Change and Displacement, the outcomes of the first Mayor's Forum for Inclusive Cities, the first briefing for the League of Arab States on the GCR, and other ongoing activities at field and regional level, the Stocktaking will reiterate the need for comprehensive solutions in the MENA region, given the protracted displacement and persistent needs of refugees and host communities.

Some additional concrete activities which are currently underway include:

1. The Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR) in Tunisia announced a new pledge of launching the first Arabic journal in the region in collaboration with UNHCR MENA to produce research and knowledge on displacement issues in the Middle East and North Africa in Arabic and by scholars and researchers from the region.
2. A workshop for young refugee writers to share about their journey as a healing mechanism, lessons, skills and talents they have obtained and how they can have a positive impact on their local communities. The idea was warmly welcomed and supported by world renowned Tunisian musician Loutfi Bouchnak.
3. Since Islamic financial institutions have a structure that has been providing support through micro financing and climate action, it was suggested that Islamic Financial Institutions should be encouraged to submit a pledge dedicated to supporting refugees and host communities through micro financing to secure sustainable financial independence among persons of concern.

Establishment of an advisory board for the MENA Civil Society Network for Displacement (CSND) is underway, encompassing network members across all countries in the region, and board is currently being selected. Consultations with national networks took place to review the workplan and identify the national focal points of each network. [MENA CSND website](#) platform is being finalized.

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