



REPORT
FROM THE
ANGLICAN
COMMUNION
OFFICE AT
THE UNITED
NATIONS

Report on the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations' Attendance at the UNHCR Annual NGO Consultation

WORKING
TOGETHER
BETTER

GENEVA

3-5 JULY 2019



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WELCOMING THE STRANGER - THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION AND REFUGEES

It is now well-known that the world is witnessing unprecedented levels of people on the move. Some are economic migrants, others refugees and asylum seekers, more still are internally displaced people – forced from their homes but remaining within their home country. As Anglicans, we are called in our Marks of Mission to “respond to human need by loving service” and to “transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.” Meeting the immediate needs of those who have been displaced, and doing what we can to build better structures to help all people flourish, is at the heart of our mission.

The Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations has been working on the area of migration, refugees, and statelessness for a number of years. We are committed to the UNHCR Welcoming the Stranger Initiative, which aims to inspire leaders of all faiths to ‘Welcome the Stranger’ with dignity, respect and loving support and are a resource and a practical tool to foster support for refugees and other displaced people in their communities. It includes a set of affirmations signed by global religious leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury. We also work ecumenically, in particular by supporting Pope Francis’ Share the Journey campaign, launched in 2017 to encourage a “culture of encounter” between host communities, refugees and migrants. In addition, we highlight and support the work of Anglican provinces, dioceses and agencies on the ground.

THE UNHCR NGO CONSULATION

The UN Refugee Agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is a global organisation mandated to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people, and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country.



Each year, UNHCR holds a consultation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), representing the largest global opportunity for NGOs to exchange views on refugees, statelessness and displacement with UNHCR and other global partners. The 2019 Annual Consultation was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from July 3rd to 5th and was attended by 453 participants from 243 organisations and 76 countries, including the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations (ACOUN).

FOCUS OF THE 2019 CONSULTATION

Under the theme of 'Working Better Together', the Consultation featured two days of panel discussions and high-level conversations on refugees, migration, disaster preparedness and climate change in the context of global migration, data and measuring progress, statelessness, and stronger partnerships. Much of the focus of the Consultation was directed towards the forthcoming Global Refugee Forum, to be held in December 2019.

MAIN DISCUSSION THEMES

The three main components of the 2019 Consultation were:

- **Data and evidence:** how can governments, civil society, and other actors use data and evidence to make an impact on refugee welfare? How do we maintain integrity, prevent fraud, and safeguard those to whom UNHCR are responsible?
- **Regionalisation:** As UNHCR decentralises its work to place resources and decision-making closer to the field, how can they work with NGO partners in a more local and regional manner?
- **The Global Refugee Forum:** how can we harness the promise of the Global Compact on Refugees, and what can we pledge to make it work?



DATA AND EVIDENCE

One of the major challenges facing UNHCR and its partners in their work is the significant data gaps that exist. The problem of persistently incomplete gathering of timely, reliable and useable data leaves a gap between reported figures of displacement and the estimated global figure, presenting a challenge in identifying risks, needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of affected people in displacement situations. Reliable data and evidence is crucial to ensuring any response is data-driven and context specific. Discussions at the Consultation demonstrated that there is an urgent need to improve data gathering and data analysis. One participant noted that this is particularly vital if we are to achieve the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals and 'leave no one behind'. Key topics discussed include emphasis on collaborating with different sectors of society to build a cross-organisations shared understanding of humanitarian and protection issues. Conversations also highlighted the importance of data protection. Data is more than just numbers. It is about people; it is about vulnerabilities, capacities and protection needs.

Another key issue highlighted at the Consultation was the data challenges related to statelessness, an issue on which the Anglican Communion Office at the UN has been **active for a number of years**. Many countries do not report on or are unable to accurately report on their stateless populations. For example, the USA hit headlines recently after the Supreme Court heard a case on whether a question on citizenship/statelessness could be posed in the upcoming census. In this case, concerns were raised over individual risk to stateless persons on answering questions on their citizenship status in the census. It was reported in South Africa that a question on statelessness/nationality documentation deters participation in the census. This lack of concrete, reliable, and gatherable data poses a challenge for addressing the challenges of statelessness, within a particularly complex area.



DATA AND EVIDENCE

The Communion's Representative to the UN, Jack Palmer-White, also used the opportunity to highlight the key role churches play in birth registration, which is an important protection against statelessness, asking the following question during a Q&A session:

In many parts of the world, places of worship are one of the main institutions that parents will come into contact with during the first days and months of a child's life. In some cases, churches are actively encouraging parents to register their child's birth - for example at the time of baptism, or through hosting registration centres in church buildings.

What can be done to build capacity for local grassroots institutions such as churches and other faith actors to support efforts to gather more and better data, so that it can be used usefully by states and UN agencies, and do the panellists have experience of working with faith actors in this way?

REGIONALISATION

UNHCR is undertaking an extensive regionalisation and decentralisation process, aimed at redistributing resources and capacities as close to the ground as possible. This effort is also linked to the broader objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, aiming to form stronger and more effective partnerships with local authorities, NGOs, and most importantly refugees. The overall message to NGOs at the Consultation was that regionalisation benefits all parties, allowing the fostering of more effective partnerships and increasing the capacity to carry out relief efforts, encouraging better coordination and focused responses. Regionalisation will also allow responses to be tailored to the political, institutional and population contexts. UNHCR is seeking more long-term, sustainable solutions due to the increase in protracted conflicts, which it cannot achieve alone; regionalisation strengthens partnerships and responses to provide a strong foundation for such responses.



Churches and other faith communities are on the front line of many displacement situations – whether in identifying early warning signs of potential displacement, meeting the physical and spiritual needs of displaced populations, or dealing with their own displacement, within countries and across borders. This makes them key partners in the regionalisation process, due to their location at the centre of communities as a trusted institution that local populations may turn to for support. The mission at the heart of Anglican churches also means that community outreach activities can, and often do, include providing support to incoming refugee populations – living out the vision of Welcoming the Stranger.

LOOKING FORWARD: THE GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM 2019

The final day of the Consultation focused on briefing on the upcoming Global Refugee Forum, taking place from 16-18 December 2019. The Forum is the first opportunity for UN Member States and other stakeholders to announce concrete pledges and contributions towards the objectives of the **Global Compact on Refugees**.

On 17 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees, after two years of extensive consultations led by UNHCR with Member States, international organizations, refugees, civil society, the private sector, and experts. The Global Compact on Refugees is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, recognising that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. It provides a blueprint for governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities get the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives. It constitutes a unique opportunity to transform the way the world responds to refugee situations, benefiting both refugees and the communities that host them.



The four key objectives of the Global Compact are to:

1. Ease the pressures on host countries;
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.

Much of the discussion at the Consultation centred on the planning and preparation for the Forum, with an overview of the objectives, structure, and key focus areas, along with explanation of how NGOs can contribute and participate, including by announcing pledges and contributions, and exchanging good practices.

One year on from the affirmation of the Global Compact, the inaugural Global Refugee Forum is a critical opportunity to build momentum towards achieving the objectives of this new commitment and strengthen the collective response to refugee situations. It seeks to transform principles and pledges into concrete action, encouraging wide participation from a range of stakeholders, including, and especially, refugees themselves. At the Forum, UN Member States and other stakeholders will deliver concrete pledges and contributions that will advance the objectives of the Global Compact and achieve tangible benefits for refugees and host communities; and highlight key achievements and exchange good practices, with the aims of supporting the international community in developing forward-looking and impactful contributions.

The forum will be co-convened by Turkey, Ethiopia, Germany, and Costa Rica, and focus on six priority areas:

1. Arrangements for burden and responsibility-sharing;
2. Education;
3. Jobs and livelihoods;
4. Energy and infrastructure;
5. Solutions (including repatriations, local integration, and resettlement);
6. Protection capacity.



UN Member states and other stakeholders have been invited to join together in co-sponsorship roles around these priority areas, to advocate on the issue areas and present joint asks. Around 30 to 40 co-sponsors per priority area are expected.

One of the main challenges, and aims, of the Forum, is to broaden the base of support for the Global Compact. The discussion at the Consultation centred around the role of NGOs in this process, and how NGOs can be a key partner in leveraging existing partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, as well as in establishing new ones, to bolster progress towards meeting the objectives of the Global Compact and the Global Forum. As the decentralisation of UNHCR reflects, there is a clear desire to adopt a multi-stakeholder strategy that promotes a whole-of-society approach, which is UNHCR-led rather than UNHCR-owned. This vision of collective ownership and participation will be crucial in achieving the goals of the Compact and the Forum.

From the discussions at the Consultation, there is a clear desire for the Forum to move beyond the format of a traditional pledging conference, to an energising and action-orientated space. Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, stated that while the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees was a 'fairly dull' UN process, his vision for the Forum is an more exciting and interactive event that 'shakes things up'. This, combined with the promise of a multi-stakeholder event with partners from all levels and sectors of society, encouraging essential partnerships between refugees, UNHCR, NGOs, and local authorities, provides a strong foundation on which the Global Refugee Forum will take place. ACOUN is looking forward to the Global Refugee Forum and the tangible and actionable outcomes that can be taken forward in our work.



FAITH ENGAGEMENT AT THE GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM

During the Consultation, ACOUN staff met with other faith-based partners to plan faith participation at the Global Refugee Forum. As part of the Consultation, various faith-based actors are in dialogue with UNHCR regarding faith participation at the Global Refugee Forum. This is the first opportunity for states and other stakeholders to make concrete pledges and commitments on how they will help realise the aims of the Global Compact on Refugees. There is a clear intention for faith-based organisations involved to speak with a unified voice – either through some kind of affirmation, or in taking work we are doing together already and turning it into pledges – and work is ongoing amongst a group of organisations to take this forward. Since July, there have been very positive developments and the ACOUN team are facilitating the engagement of a number of Anglican provinces in making joint pledges, centered around themes such as education, assisting in resettlement, and using their local influence to promote peaceful and inclusive communities.

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