

ReDSS Ethiopia – Global Refugee Forum preparations

1. Background

The first [Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF) will take place in Geneva on 17 and 18 December 2019. The GRF objectives are to: (1) Create, develop and strengthen architecture and arrangements needed to operationalize the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) over the longer-term; (2) Translate the principles of increased solidarity and more equitable burden - and responsibility-sharing into concrete action; and (3) Focus on broadening the support base and arrangements contributing to burden - and responsibility sharing.

The GRF aims to achieve these through the announcement of **pledges and contributions** by States and other actors that will advance the objectives of the GCR and GRF thematic focus areas¹ and the **showcasing of key achievement and good practice** for implementing the GCR.

The Government of Ethiopia is a co-convenor of this year's GRF (along with Costa Rica, Germany, Pakistan and Turkey). More broadly UNHCR and other stakeholders have acknowledged the importance of GRF preparations in countries, led by States and inclusive of multi-stakeholder consultations to support the preparation of pledges and contributions where gaps and goals are defined under the GCR objectives and GRF themes.

This **background document** has been developed with ReDSS members to support preparations to participate in government-led consultation processes. This document can both serve as a guide in terms of coherent messaging to the Government of Ethiopia during consultative processes but also to key stakeholders (donors, development and humanitarian actors, civil society etc) to support a common agenda and encourage the development of supporting (joint) pledges and contributions.²

2. Suggested Ethiopia focus areas for GRF pledges/contributions

ReDSS/ReDSS members are not advocating for specific pledges but would like to support the Government of Ethiopia and all stakeholders to take stock of implementation of Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) initiatives and to develop, based on learning and evidence, a common understanding of what is needed to operationalize the GCR approach in Ethiopia.

- **Implementation of the 2019 Refugee Proclamation and adoption of the relevant secondary legislations in terms of out of camp policy and expanding opportunities for refugee economic engagement and self-reliance**

In February 2019 Ethiopia introduced its revised refugee law. This commitment in itself reveals a significant policy transformation in its management of refugees and specifically in terms of supporting the socio-economic integration of refugees, which is important and should be showcased at the GRF. While the revised Refugee Proclamation provides the legal foundation for a number of specific national, regional and international commitments, it has yet to be fully tested and followed by additional secondary legislations - regulations issued by Council of Ministries and directives issued by Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) that elaborate and direct the proper implementation of this proclamation. The implementation of the Refugee Proclamation could facilitate the realization of such pledges as expansion of out of camp policy and economic engagement and self-reliance of refugees.

¹ This year's GRF is being organized based on six themes: (1) burden and responsibility sharing; (2) education; (3) jobs and livelihoods; (4) energy and infrastructure; (5) solutions; and (6) protection capacity.

² The announcement of pledges and contributions are not limited to states. UNHCR has noted that joint contributions could help focus on longer-term cooperation to build a broad, sustainable support for refugees and their hosts. In particular UNHCR has noted the role of 'partnership contributions' where a group of stakeholders form partnerships and announce contributions towards the achievement of a shared goal such as supporting the decision of a host country to implement a particular policy and donors, including other States and stakeholders, could provide the necessary additional financial, material and technical assistance to support the implementation of this policy through funding, providing technical support and material assistance. See [UNHCR Guidance Note](#) on the GRF for more information.

The Government of Ethiopia could commit itself to specific next steps and timeframes for the move from legislative changes to an operational framework, including through clarity on a timeframe for directives with clear interpretation of the Refugee Proclamation. Key stakeholders such as donor and development actors could then be encouraged to announce matching commitments (pledges and contributions) to support concrete government pledges.

- ***Finalization and formal adoption of the National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS) to support collective action and outcomes***

The Government of Ethiopia has drafted its 10-year National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS). This is a key reference for the roll out of the CRRF and now GCR and represents in its present form a significant step forward in terms of implementing commitments made at the 2016 Refugee Leaders' Summit in 2016 and as part of the 2017 Nairobi Declaration/Action plan and related processes. A key step forward would be for the strategy to be formally adopted before the GRF in December 2019. The Government could then commit itself to integrate the NCRRS into national action plans through the development of clear, context-specific implementation guidelines in 2020.

The NCRRS could provide a clear indication of how to operationalize the CRRF and GCR in Ethiopia. It would facilitate a multi-stakeholder approach going beyond the humanitarian agenda and support long-term investment from development actors. A finalized NCRRS and national action plans would allow partners such as donors, development and humanitarian actors to work together towards collective outcomes through financial and material support and aligned programming.

- ***Investing in government-led coordination structures and offices to reach their full-capacity to lead and coordinate the response***

At present there is some uncertainty of the role of National Coordination Office (NCO), the Secretariat of the Steering Committee, established in 2018 to ensure a multi-stakeholder and whole of government approach to implementation of the NCRRS. There have been recent rumors of discussions that it may be absorbed into ARRA.

The focus should be around supporting the Government of Ethiopia to effectively lead on the refugee response through a structure that can be accepted across government. The Government of Ethiopia should be supported to put in place an architecture that can support the “whole of government” approach needed through coordinating across line ministries, regional and local government authorities.

The government coordination structures could be clarified in the final NCRRS draft and roles and responsibilities clearly articulated. The focus could then be on further capacity building of national, regional and local institutions and authorities to lead and coordinate the response through long-term support and strategic technical assistance and capacity building from donors and partners.

- ***Development of area (regional)-based action plans based on participation of local stakeholders (including displacement-affected communities) to ensure representation, ownership and collective accountability***

It is important to invest in the development of area-based sub-regional and local action plans aligned to the NCRRS to support integrated and comprehensive programming for both refugee and host populations. It is critical that local authorities lead and coordinate this response across all phases of planning and implementation. These plans should also be developed inclusive of refugees' and host communities' needs and vulnerabilities and to make these solutions lasting, locally relevant and feasible. Engaging the target groups ensures ownership and supports sustainability, conflict prevention and resolution of issues. It also helps manage the expectations of the participants from the plans and can clarify their respective responsibilities.

There are some promising signs of sub-regional and local action plans in the Somali Regional State (SRS), with government-led functioning coordination structures at regional and *woreda* levels in SRS and initial area-based capacity assessment plans being developed.

The Government of Ethiopia could commit itself to development of area (sub-regional) based action plans in 2020. This could encourage other stakeholders to provide ‘matching’ commitments in terms of

strengthening regional and *woreda* coordination and other longer-term capacity building arrangements to support local authorities. An area-based approach would also support programming approaches by partners that are aligned to the plans and longer-term in focus and create a platform for joint accountability.

- ***Development of a new GCR financing instrument for Ethiopia***

The principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing is central to the GCR, but has not been adequately discussed in the Ethiopian context. Donors' funding modalities have started to change but without any coherent strategy as to how the needs of refugees and displacement-affected communities will be met in totality. This leads to a potential trust deficit on the part of government.

The focus should be on supporting the Government of Ethiopia to consider and design new financing instrument(s) appropriate for different elements of the GCR commitments. This can be led by ARRA, but the involvement of the Ministry of Finance will be critical to ensure the design of something that will work for both the Ethiopian Government and the donors. This process should take into account different elements of the pledges, from service delivery through to economic opportunities, and will need to consider the role of local government authorities. It will undoubtedly be a complex process, and appropriate time should be taken to undertake the work. There may be opportunities to explore and test different approaches in SRS given the progress that has been made there on coordination structures.

The Government could commit to designing a new, tested financing instrument within the next 12-24 months, with technical support from the World Bank. This could then provide a platform for donors to think more coherently about future funding commitments.