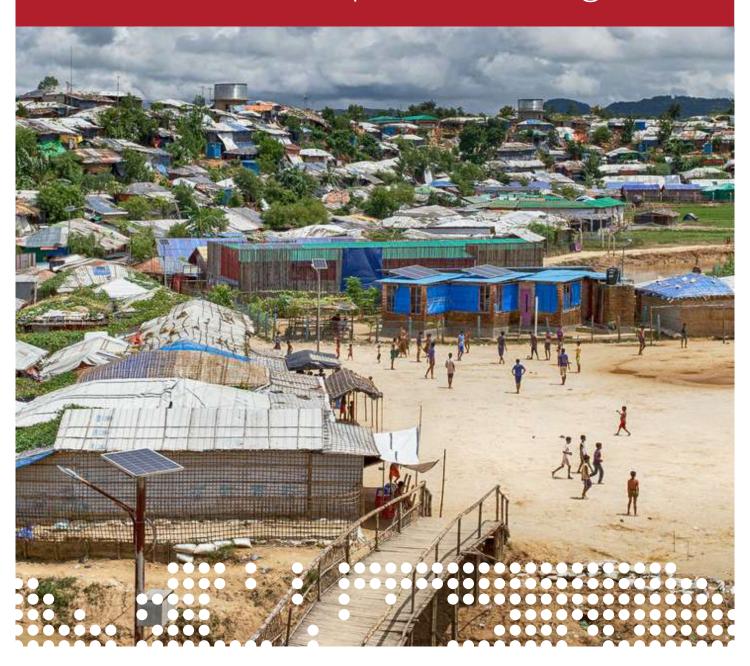OCTOBER 2020

DRC DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL

A RESTRICTION OF RESPONSIBILITY-SHARING:

Exploring the impact
of COVID-19 on the
Global Compact on Refugees

Acknowledgements

Content

Acronyms and Abbreviations

1951 Convention	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
COVID/COVID-19	SARS-CoV-2 (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2)
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EU	European Union
GAIN	GCR Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network
GCR	Global Compact for Refugees; here also "Refugee Compact"
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GRF	Global Refugee Forum
ICLA	Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RLO	Refugee-led Organisation
RRP	Refugee Response Plans
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals (as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

The affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)[1] in December 2018 demonstrated a powerful commitment by the international community to refugee protection and international cooperation in refugee responses. Although in many ways the GCR was created to address crises, few could have imagined the global upheaval the world would face just over a year after its affirmation and only months after the Global Refugee Forum (GRF),[2] where 1,400 pledges were made to implement the GCR's objectives.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not a refugee crisis per se but it has created multiple crises for refugees. Refugees are among the most likely populations to suffer both the direct and secondary impacts of the pandemic. In most countries in the world they face pre-existing barriers to protection and assistance, and now are often – though notably not always – excluded from host countries' national COVID-19 responses and relief programs. Lockdowns have affected the organisations they may usually receive assistance from, which in many cases have struggled to provide the same amount and type of support as they previously had, while travel restrictions have limited the access of both aid and personnel to many regions in need.[3] In camps as well as in dense urban areas where many refugees reside, a lack of basic health infrastructure, overcrowding, and poor sanitation all contribute to the risk of transmission and infection.

These direct health risks as well as secondary impacts on refugee protection, rights, livelihoods, and access to asylum procedures – to name just a few – demonstrate the crucial need for increased and sustained investment in refugee protection and assistance around the globe. As the world's newest framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing as well as a reaffirmation of the protection and rights afforded to refugees in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the 1951 Convention), the GCR has an important role to play in improving support to refugees and the countries hosting them in relation to COVID-19.

This report examines the current and potential use of the GCR to address COVID-19 and its impacts, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the GCR itself.[4] It provides analysis of and reflections on the effects of the pandemic and concomitant challenges on different aspects of the GCR, ranging from shrinking asylum space and restricted responsibility-sharing to how the Compact features in public advocacy surrounding pandemic responses. Questions explored in the report include: How is the GCR used to address COVID-19 and its impacts? What is the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the GCR in terms of refugee protection? What might these impacts mean for the GCR's short- and longer-term viability? It then offers key take-aways and recommendations aimed at a variety of actors.

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1 The full GCR can be found here: https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR_English.pdf

2 The GRF is one outcome of the GCR designed to support its implementation. Para 17 of the GCR explains: 'A periodic Global Refugee Forum, at ministerial level, will be convened for all United Nations Member States, together with relevant stakeholders, to announce concrete pledges and contributions towards the objectives of the global compact, as set out in para 7, and to consider opportunities, challenges and ways in which burden- and responsibility sharing can be enhanced.'

3 NRC (2020) Covid-19 restrictions preventing thousands from accessing lifesaving aid. 25 March. Available at: https://www.nrc.no/news/2020/march/covid19-restrictions/

4 Due to time constraints, this study focuses primarily on refugees, although in instances broadens out to other forcibly displaced people. Impacts relating to stateless and internally displaced people were not explicitly researched, although they are mentioned in the GCR.

I. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership and Advocacy

More leadership and advocacy is needed surrounding refugee protection and the upholding of commitments made in the GCR.
Key INGO and NGO informants identified a lack of leadership on core aspects of the GCR such as responsibility sharing and resettlement, and a broader lack of public pressure to hold States accountable for the objectives, approaches, and principles of the GCR. There is a strong fear that border restrictions and a lack of access to asylum in donor States, combined with a shortfall in funding to the world's major refugee-hosting States, will negatively impact both refugee protection and the global norm of equitable responsibility-sharing that the GCR promotes.

Although successful advocacy often occurs bilaterally and behind closed doors, many informants desired a stronger public stance on refugee protection from UNHCR, particularly regarding the actions of traditionally donor States that voted to affirm the Compact. At the same time, the GCR's whole-of-society approach illustrates the importance of leadership, advocacy, and action from a range of stakeholders.

Limited focus on the GCR at the local and country level in many countries means that its explicit implementation is rare, while scarce reference in NGO and UN documents on COVID-19 suggest that the GCR needs to be better mainstreamed, as it is not being employed as an advocacy tool for protection and responsibility-sharing in the way it could be. At the same time, UNHCR has sought to demonstrate the relevance of the GCR through compiling relevant GRF pledges and offering targeted support to particular high-value pledges in areas such as health, protection, and jobs and livelihoods. Good practices like this could be emulated through internal discussions within organisations on programmes and priorities relating to COVID-19 and beyond.

Recommendations:

Take stronger public stances – and use the GCR
- **UNHCR, INGOs, and NGOs must actively reinforce the GCR as a tool** to promote fair and equitable responsibility- and burden-sharing, and hold States' accountable to their commitments in the GCR. This can happen through active implementation as well as public advocacy through discussion and mainstreaming in documents to further the GCR's presence in current discourse.

Uphold the GCR in actions
- **Engaged stakeholders must retain a focus on finding solutions for refugees**, even when politically challenging. This means maintaining discussions on resettlement, regularisation and naturalisation, and safe conditions for voluntary return. Short-term needs created by the pandemic must not obscure the long-term needs for development and solutions.
- **All States that have affirmed the GCR must align their actions and legislation with the commitments they have endorsed**, notably but in no way exclusively commitments to refugee protection and in particular the GCR objectives of easing the burden on host countries and expanding access to third country solutions.
- **In particular, traditional donor states which have affirmed the GCR must embrace it as applicable to their own actions and legislation**, particularly in light of COVID-19. This not only includes increasing funding to major refugee-hosting states to ease pressure and increase responsibility-sharing but ensuring that international law regarding the right to seek asylum and non-refoulement is upheld.

There is energy and appetite to draw on the GCR and GRF and continue to implement them from a variety of actors.
Interviews revealed overall positivity about the existence of the GCR and its potential for influence. There is an openness from different actors to engage and an overall commitment to the principles and objectives. Several actors noted with positive surprise how well the GRF had gone and appreciated its aspirational nature. Overall the humanitarian and development community, including private sector actors, want the GCR 'to work'. But there is clarity that it needs to be fit for purpose. Part of this means demonstrating its use and relevance in many diverse settings and other crises. For this, more education, advocacy, and action are needed.

Recommendations:

Create spaces for cross-organisational thematic dialogue

- **Creating or re-activating spaces for thematic discussions by NGOs, INGOs, UNHCR, and other relevant stakeholders is needed**. There is apparent value, for example, in **maintaining the co-sponsorship working groups of the GRF** and reigniting those that may be less active than others. Ongoing engagement around the working group themes – energy and infrastructure, jobs and livelihoods, education, solutions, burden and responsibility sharing, and protection capacity – offers a means to retain focus on needs beyond those generated by the pandemic while at the same time integrating in responses to COVID-19. The creation of a health co-sponsorship working group may also be useful.

Share lessons learned

- **UNHCR and Host States should share lessons learned through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) to inform current and future responses**. Several informants discussed the NGO and government engagement facilitated through the CRRF as important learning for future humanitarian and development work, which COVID-19 paves the way for. One informant foresaw the financial constraints for the humanitarian system as necessitating more future collaboration with host country governments overall, and with various parts of government authorities at local and district levels.

Increase localisation – meaningfully

- **The GCR's whole-of-society approach must be upheld through the transfer of funding and responsibility to local relevant stakeholders**, such as local authorities, civil society actors, and others outlined in the GCR, and promoted as a key focus for 'building back better'.
- **As part of this, a critical discussion of localisation and how it can occur meaningfully through partnerships and adequate funding is needed within UNHCR and INGOs**. Local relevant stakeholders, including refugee-led organisations, must be financially supported to continue their work. Broader remote programming must not become a means to place disproportionate risk on local actors while maintaining unequal power dynamics.

Implementation and Impact

In many contexts there remains a gap in the 'translation' of the GCR from global rhetoric to national and local implementation. This appears to be due in part to a lack of tailored GCR implementation plans (GCR paras 20-21) and further translation of the GCR, which has in turn has made it difficult for the GCR to offer concrete guidance and be utilised in many countries during COVID-19. This risks becoming a chicken-or-egg problem, wherein the lack of understanding of the GCR's relevance in particular contexts prevents the creation of plans to implement it, which in turn prevents wider understanding of the objectives, structures, and approaches it offers. Work undertaken in CRRF pilot countries represents an important foundation that must be built on through further funding and implementation, as even in these countries gaps remain.

While the development of such plans is likely more challenging in the context of the pandemic, **a broader understanding of what the GCR can offer to address both the pandemic and the recovery from it is needed** at national and local levels in particular, including in camps and settlements. This includes the matching of needs with committed GRF pledges, advocacy through the regional support platforms, and the potential for further development funding relating in particular to national inclusion and systems strengthening.

The GCR must urgently move into the implementation phase to address the COVID-19 pandemic and be most relevant today.
To ensure implementation, GCR mechanisms and arrangements must be upheld, attention to pledges must be maintained, and more education and implementation is necessary. Existing platforms and mechanisms created through the GCR offer channels for COVID-19 support to be provided – yet further financing is needed to ensure this assistance and other implementation. Given the breadth of the GCR, some initiatives and mechanisms mentioned within it must also be further fleshed out. Doing so will offer further clarity around next steps as well as increase the ability for various actors to further mainstream the GCR.

GRF pledges can also be used as tools to remind actors of their commitments. At the same time, pledges must not be considered as the implementation of the GCR at the expense of its important protection and solution components (already underrepresented at the GRF), which risk being further pushed to the side due to the pandemic.

Recommendations:

Implement at national and local levels

- **UNHCR, Host and Donor States, and other relevant stakeholders must urgently focus on the action-oriented, operational sides of the GCR and increase implementation at national and local levels**. Engaged actors must continue to evaluate how to implement the GCR to address the ongoing and future issues of movement and political crises caused by COVID-19 – and those caused by crises yet to come.
- To further the above, **UNHCR, Host States, and where relevant development actors must fund and in cases develop concrete action plans and detailed roadmaps to 'translate' the GCR** to specific areas (camps, cities, regions).
- As part of this, **Donor States must uphold funding commitments and continue their investment in refugees** despite financial constraints arising from the pandemic.

Increase the visibility of the GCR

- **Improving 'literacy' on the GCR through more education, advocacy, and action is needed** – in part by demonstrating its relevance – at local and national levels to increase understanding of how it can be used as a tool in the COVID-19 response. Sharing case studies of GCR implementation in different contexts is a further way to improve literacy at regional and international levels, as well.
- **UNHCR and refugee-serving INGOs and NGOs should undertake GCR mainstreaming exercises** to improve literacy on the GCR and align programming priorities at local and national levels with core components of the Compact.
- **Host states should take the lead in mainstreaming the GCR into development plans** and COVID-19 response plans at both a national level and where relevant at local and regional levels.

Realize multi-stakeholder engagement

- **UNHCR and the wider UN system should continue to work with large-scale development actors like the World Bank to devote development funding to the GCR objectives** of systems strengthening and national inclusion in regions where displaced people and vulnerable host communities can benefit the most. The IDA19 window for host communities and refugees offers one opportunity to do this, as does the Bank's emergency support.
- **Multi-stakeholder engagement and sustained funding is needed for GCR Support Platforms** to fulfil their intended functions.
- **International partners should align COVID-19 responses with national coordination mechanisms at district and other levels** to realise the whole-of-government response advocated by the GCR.

Thinking Ahead

Rather than a one-off crisis, **COVID-19 must be seen as a stress-test for future crises** as well as an ongoing, cyclical series of crises that are events for the humanitarian and development community to address – as well as a context to which programming must adapt. This mind set requires the simultaneous humanitarian and development focus that the GCR holds at its core, as well as the collaboration with diverse actors that it promotes.

Closing the longstanding relief-development gap in refugee assistance is a crucial step which can be taken **through proactive engagement in involving refugees in national systems**, which are then strengthened, to address both immediate and longer-term needs.

Many informants seemed hopeful **about an ongoing shift in both rhetoric and practice regarding the visibility of refugee-led organisations** and broader refugee agency and participation. In line with the Grand Bargain and other localisation commitments, the channeling of funding and meaningful responsibility to local and national civil society actors, including refugee-led organisations, involved in the COVID-19 refugee response offers the potential for ongoing assistance in the case of 'second wave' travel restrictions and supply chain disruptions. These actions also pave the way for a more sustainable recovery from COVID-19.

Recommendations:

Focus on development and solutions
- Key GCR stakeholders, including States, UNHCR and the UN system, development agencies, and NGOs, should **ensure that development- and solutions-oriented aspects of the GCR are prioritised** alongside meeting emergency needs and upholding refugee protection. To address COVID-19 and prepare for future crises, funding and advocacy must target these areas, which include cash-based assistance (GCR para 81), establishing early warning systems (GCR paras 52-53) to identify COVID-19-related and other forced displacement, and the streamlining of humanitarian service delivery with local and national actors (GCR para 16).
- Host States, with the financial support of Donor States and humanitarian and development agencies, should **include refugees in their national system**s, such as healthcare, education, and social protection.
- **UNHCR, INGOs, NGOs, development actors, and other stakeholders should advocate for temporary inclusion measures of displaced people into national systems to be made permanent**, and continue to advocate for the opening of such systems to displaced people in States where it has not yet occurred.

Meaningfully engage local actors
- **The UN System, INGOs, and private donors should develop clear mechanisms and targets for devolving responsibility and funding to the local 'relevant stakeholders' of the GCR involved in refugee assistance**. This includes local authorities, civil society, host community members, and refugees themselves (GCR para 3). Full transparency of the percentage of funding allocated is needed, and, wherever possible, unrestricted funding that enables local, contextualised responses should be provided.

Maintain mobility
- **States must ensure access to territory and asylum**. The ability for people to move safely, and to safely seek asylum, is crucial. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates that more – not less – international cooperation and responsibility-sharing surrounding mobility and protection at all stages of displacement is needed today.

II. OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

This report is based on information from key informant interviews (KIIs); participant and non-participant observation of relevant remote meetings and webinars; content analysis of the GCR and the GRF pledges; and content analysis of NGO, UN, and other stakeholder documents on COVID-19. Annex 1 provides an overview of research methodology and meetings and webinars observed.

Interviews were held with 55 members of NGOs, INGOs, UNHCR, members of government, GCR support platforms, and other GCR stakeholders including refugees, refugee-led organisations, and private sector actors. Table 1 shows a breakdown of these actors by sector and Table 2 shows an overview of countries where interview informants are based. A validation consultation was also held with members of DRC, UNHCR, Centre for European Policy Studies, and the ASILE project Civil Society Group.[5]

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5 The ASILE project examines the interactions between the GCR and emerging international protection systems, with a particular focus on the European Union's role and contribution. For more information, see: https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-projects/asile/

Please note that the conclusions and recommendations are a consolidated presentation of the views expressed by KIIs, and not that of the DRC. More interviews were conducted with NGOs and INGO than with donors, member states and development partners, which represents a bias in this report and an important area for further research.

Table 1. Overview of Key Informant Interviews

- **Central/federal government**
- **Local government employees including mayors**
- **GCR support platform members**
- **UN and INGO employees engaged in implementing pledged projects or working in relevant areas of GCR objectives**
- **NGO and Civil society organisations and actors engaged in implementing pledged projects or working in relevant areas of GCR objectives, including refugee-led organisations**
- **Private sector actors that have made GRF pledges or are implementing activities related to the GCR**
- **Academics and experts in the field researching the GCR and COVID-19 in different areas (e.g. asylum and resettlement), including the GCR Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network (GAIN)**

Table 2. Regions Explored in the Research

Interview informants were based in the following countries:

Sub-Saharan Africa
- Kampala, Uganda
- Arua, Uganda
- Nairobi, Kenya
- Kalobeyei Settlement, Kenya
- Djibouti City, Djibouti
- Juba, South Sudan

Central & South America
- Colombia
- Brazil

South Asia
- Cox's Bazar Refugee camps,
- Bangladesh
- Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Delhi, India

Europe
- Geneva, Switzerland
- London, UK
- Oxford, UK
- Brussels, Belgium
- The Hague, Netherlands
- Copenhagen, Denmark
- Berlin, Germany

Middle East
- Amman, Jordan

Australia
- Sydney, Australia

III. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON REFUGEES

When considering the relevance of the GCR to address COVID-19 and its impacts on refugees today, it is first important to understand how refugees experience the pandemic and related challenges. This section briefly presents key areas where refugees are most negatively affected.

Health implications
Refugees are one of the most adversely affected populations by COVID-19. A recent World Health Organization editorial discusses the challenge of addressing COVID-19 within refugee populations due to factors such as the impossibility of social distancing in many contexts; poor treatment outcomes due to other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria; language barriers, misinformation, and stigmatization that reduce refugees' ability to receive information,

testing, and treatment.[6] These issues are compounded by the broader structural issues of poor health and sanitation infrastructure in many countries of the Global South, where an estimated 86% of refugees live. A lack of testing and limited access to data on the pandemic in crisis-affected countries in Africa, for example, has led to fears that the 'COVID response is fighting the epidemic in the dark', with widespread ramifications both within countries and around the globe.[7] It is assumed that in many low-income countries, particularly those affected by conflict, cases are much higher than official numbers suggest. Given the under-testing in many refugee camps, it is hard to fully understand the impact of the virus and the level of support required to combat it.

Border closures, restricted movement, and the lost right to seek asylum
The closure of an estimated 167 countries' borders – with at least 57 making no exceptions for asylum seekers and others freezing the processing of asylum applications entirely – violates the right to seek asylum and is a serious protection concern.[8] And, in turn, it creates many other protection issues. There are reports of asylum seekers and other migrants attempting dangerous crossings, such as across the Atlantic to the Canary Islands, in an attempt to successfully seek asylum during the COVID-19 pandemic.[9] Accounts of pushbacks and refoulement have grown, as well as violence along closed borders. Many of these are occurring under the pretext of health concerns, demonstrating a dangerous justification for the violation of international law.[10] The current reality of border restrictions and access to asylum can be seen through UNHCR's COVID-19 Platform on Temporary Measures and Impact on Protection, an evidence-based tool updated biweekly that captures global data on borders and admission of asylum-seekers and national asylum procedures in an effort to inform policy and decision-making.[11]

Protection and immediate needs
For many refugees the secondary impacts of COVID-19 are more frightening than the virus itself. Lockdowns and restrictions on freedom of movement mean refugees in both camps and urban areas face the risk of starvation amid lost livelihoods and limited assistance, as well as increased insecurity. In France's Calais settlements, a lack of regular deliveries of food and water due to lockdowns, and the French authority's limits on water supplies to the informal settlements, has worsened already deplorable conditions – in one of the world's wealthiest countries.[12]

A leader of a Rohingya women's organisation in Bangladesh explained the situation in the Cox's Bazar refugee camps:

> The most important issue is the food shortage. Before lockdown most volunteers were engaged with NGOs so they got some wages so they could buy chicken and vegetables. But now everyone is stuck inside their house. Domestic violence is increasing, GBV [gender-based violence] is increasing, and women and children are most affected. They can't maintain social distancing but everyone is afraid to expose symptoms of COVID because they are afraid their house and the area will be put under lockdown, and they won't be able to collect food or water. It's not a jail – it's like an open grave.

Accounts of unlawful forced evictions, detention, and other discrimination of refugees by local and national authorities are widespread while, as mentioned in the quote above, dismal numbers globally demonstrate a rise in GBV also affecting refugees.[13] The 'shadow pandemic' of domestic violence as well as increasing accounts of human trafficking and exploitation,[14] and many other risks, demonstrate the urgent need for the protection of refugees to be taken into account as part of countries' COVID-19 responses. The women's organisation leader described the situation in and around Cox's Bazar:

6 Alemi, Q., Stempel, C., Siddiq H. & Kim, E. (2020) Refugees and COVID-19: achieving a comprehensive public health response. Bulletin of the World Health Organization. Available at: https://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/98/8/20-271080/en/

7 IRC (2020) Press Release: As confirmed COVID cases more than double in July across African countries, a lack of testing in crisis-affected contexts keeps responders in the dark about the real spread of the disease, warns IRC. Available at: https://www.rescue-uk.org/press-release/confirmed-covid-cases-more-double-july-across-african-countries-lack-testing-crisis

8 UNHCR (2020) Key Legal Considerations on access to territory for persons in need of international protection in the context of the COVID-19 response, 16 March Available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/5e7132834.html; See also: UNHCR (2020) Beware long-term damage to human rights and refugee rights from the coronavirus pandemic: UNHCR. 22 April. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2020/4/5ea035ba4/beware-long-term-damage-human-rights-refugee-rights-coronavirus-pandemic.html

9 UNHCR (2020) The Refugee Brief – September 4 2020. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/refugeebrief/the-refugee-brief-4-september-2020/

10 Amnesty International (2020) Global: Ignored by COVID-19 responses, refugees face starvation. 13 May. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/05/refugees-and-migrants-being-forgotten-in-covid19-crisis-response/

11 To access the platform, see: https://im.unhcr.org/covid19_platform/

12 The Guardian (2020) Covid-19 spreading quickly through refugee camps, warn Calais aid groups. 9 April. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/09/covid-19-spreading-quickly-though-refugee-camps-warn-calais-aid-groups

13 IRC (2020) Shadow pandemic of domestic violence threatens to engulf world's largest refugee camp as COVID-19 further jeopardises access to support services for women and girls. Press Release, 11 June. Available at: https://www.rescue-uk.org/press-release/shadow-pandemic-domestic-violence-threatens-engulf-worlds-largest-refugee-camp-covid

14 UNHCR (2020) UNHCR warns of increased COVID-19-related trafficking risks for refugees, displaced and stateless Press Release, 30 July. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2020/7/5f22e2844/unhcr-warns-increased-covid-19-related-trafficking-risks-refugees-displaced.html

> We still don't know who is inciting this trafficking but it is happening. People want a better life, better school but there is no communication, the internet is shut down. People are hostages so they try to jump to other countries [through traffickers].

Research shows that refugees are in desperate situations around the world. Telephone interviews with refugees and migrants on the impact of COVID-19 on their lives in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger found that while 86% of respondents indicated they need extra assistance, only 21% had received it. [15] Cash, sanitary items, and basic needs such as food, water, and shelter were the most cited needs in that order. Meanwhile, a survey by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Turkish Red Crescent of 500 refugee households in Turkey found that 70% of those surveyed had lost their jobs since the pandemic began and over 50% of families have had to find other or additional means to cover expenses, including borrowing money. [16] Food was the most common expense which borrowed money was used for, followed by rent, demonstrating the precariousness of many refugees' lives.

Livelihoods and Economic Impacts
Research also shows that refugees will suffer some of the largest economic impacts of lockdowns and restrictions on movement. Analysis on data from eight main refugee-hosting countries – Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Peru, Turkey, and Uganda – found that refugees are 60% more likely to work in the economic sectors most impacted by the pandemic, compared to 37% of host populations. [17] Refugee women face a distinct disadvantage as they are highly over-represented in these sectors, which include retail and food services. Given the prevalence of refugees working in the informal sector around the world, which has already been heavily impacted by the pandemic, it is likely that these findings apply similarly to other countries, as well.

Yet "[s]ecuring public health and protecting refugees are not mutually exclusive,' Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has said, 'This is not a dilemma. We have to do both.' 18 The following section examines how the GCR can play a role in ensuring the protection of and assistance to refugees during COVID-19 and other crises.

IV. EXAMINING THE GCR IN LIGHT OF COVID-19

The GCR's key rationale to promote 'predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing' lays a framework for addressing crises which induce forced displacement or within which refugees are involved. It also presents a global recommitment to uphold and ensure the implementation of the international refugee protection regime through its approaches and core elements. As such it has tremendous potential to contribute to discussions on key issues brought forth by the pandemic such as border closures, the halting of resettlement or reduced ability to apply for asylum, restrictions on movement within countries, refugee rights and protection while in displacement, as well as the combined humanitarian and development approach that the Compact promotes.

When one considers the value of the GCR as a meaningful international agreement to use in times of crisis, and during COVID-19 in particular, one factor immediately stands out: the GCR exists. The importance of its existence was summed up by one NGO informant who exclaimed, 'Because we already have the GCR, the world doesn't have to go through that process again! And, let's be honest when we look around – today it probably wouldn't.' As a newly affirmed document, the GCR demonstrates both the contemporary importance of the 1951 Convention and a commitment to a newer vision placing responsibility sharing, development, and a variety of actors at the centre of 21st century refugee responses. Additionally, as a document affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly, the GCR has significant potential for influence and implementation despite being non-binding.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the 2016 New York Declaration which laid out the vision for the Compact, the CRRF, and the GCR were created with the aim of addressing large refugee movements rather than the mobility issues associated with the pandemic today, namely closed borders, restricted freedom of movement, and other

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15 Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) (2020) Impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants in West Africa. MMC West Africa 4MI COVID-19 Snapshot – 13 May. MMC, Danish Refugee Council. Available at: https://drc.ngo/media/2bgncmrt/4mi_west_africa_may2020.pdf

16 IFRC & Turkish Red Crescent (2020) Impact of COVID-19 on refugee populations benefitting from the emergency social safety net (ESSN) programme, Assessment Report. Available at: https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/05/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Refugee-Populations-Benefitting-from-ESSN-Programme.pdf

17 Center for Global Development, Refugees International, and IRC (2020) Locked Down and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees' Economic Inclusion. Policy Paper 179, July. Available at: https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/4994/locked-down-left-behind-refugees-economic-inclusion-covid.pdf

18 UNHCR (2020) Beware long-term damage to human rights and refugee rights from the coronavirus pandemic: UNHCR. 22 April. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2020/4/5ea035ba4/beware-long-term-damage-human-rights-refugee-rights-coronavirus-pandemic.html

containment measures. Despite these differences, the GCR's grounding in the international refugee protection regime, core focus on responsibility-sharing and international cooperation, and main objectives make it fit for purpose in addressing the pandemic and its impacts. Additionally, the language of paragraph 12 of the GCR refers to its applicability in a broader range of crises than simply large movements, and in this way can be considered applicable to many 'situations present[ing] complex challenges for affected States' (GCR para 12) – under which the COVID-19 pandemic certainly falls.

While some aspects of the GCR may not be as readily useful now, such as Section 1.2 on immediate reception arrangements, other areas such as Section 1.1 on early warning, preparedness and contingency planning will likely become more relevant if the pandemic endures and conditions in particular countries continue to deteriorate.

Drawing on key informant interviews and secondary sources, the following section looks at different aspects of the GCR, including objectives, principles, and commitments, which are relevant and provide guidance in responding to and cooperating internationally in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives and Content

All four GCR objectives are highly relevant for addressing the pandemic and its effects. The first and second objective, of easing pressures on host countries and enhancing refugee self-reliance, offer areas to advocate for addressing immediate needs of both host countries and refugees in light of the pandemic and secondary impacts. The third and fourth objectives – to 'expand access to host country solutions' and to 'support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity' – concentrate on concrete areas of protection and solutions that must remain priorities despite other needs related to COVID-19. The side box presents some ways the objectives offer inroads to advocate for COVID-19-related restrictions to be lifted and for refugee rights to be respected and protected.

A recent paper by UNHCR has also drawn out many ways the GCR and GRF pledges can address the pandemic and its related socioeconomic and protection impacts. [19] It highlights the importance of key principles of the GCR – burden and responsibility sharing, protection, inclusion in national systems, and solutions – as well as discusses the prioritisation of implementing GRF pledges for health, WASH, social protection, education and livelihoods (p3). It also discusses the importance of protection mechanisms such as asylum systems, and flags the Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG) as one GCR mechanism to support the capacity development

19 UNHCR (2020) The role of the Global Compact on Refugees in the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Geneva: UNHCR.

How can the main GCR objectives be used to address challenges & restrictions created or exacerbated by COVID-19?

- **(i) 'ease pressures on host countries'**: Offers the possibility to advocate for funding commitments and pledges to be followed through on (or to be pledged) despite budget constraints and shifting priorities by States and other actors; presents the opportunity to invest in national systems that would help host governments provide services beyond the current crisis.

- **(ii) 'enhance refugee self-reliance'**: Opens (ongoing) conversations about including refugees into national healthcare and other systems, particularly in urban areas where international support is limited; allows a clear linkage to rights such as the freedom of movement and the need for restrictions on it to be lifted appropriately; creates an opportunity for critical dialogue about what refugee self-reliance actually constitutes as lockdowns have brought the precariousness of informal work to the fore, as well as what assistance is needed to foster safe, sustainable livelihoods now and in the future.

- **(iii) 'expand access to third country solutions'**: Presents a clear opportunity to combat COVID-19 related border restrictions; encourages exploration of 'complementary pathways' (para 95), which has been emphasized by UNHCR during COVID-19, but also offers an important grounding on normal asylum and resettlement channels; recent discussions on reopening resettlement pathways are in line with the GCR's proposed three-year strategy (2019 – 2021) 'to increase the pool of resettlement places…as well as to consolidate emerging resettlement programmes' and the joint UNHCR-IOM Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative (CRISP).

- **(iv) 'support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity'**: Keeps conversation about solutions 'on the table' at a time when much of the focus has become short-term and emergency; highlights the importance of regional awareness of different countries' engagement with GCR and related processes, as this affects not only the numbers of asylum seekers entering a particular country but the ability for voluntary repatriation to resume or take place safely at all.

of asylum systems fit for remote processing and other adjustments necessitated by COVID-19.

Other important elements of the GCR that offer guidance and opportunities for cooperation in response to COVID-19 are summarized in the box below.

Key Areas and Aspects of the GCR to Support the COVID-19 Response

- **Grounding in international legal frameworks**, including the international refugee protection regime, relevant human rights instruments, international humanitarian law, and other international instruments (para 5): Some countries which have affirmed the GCR but not the 1951 Convention or other legal frameworks may feel more accountability or can be made more accountable to elements of binding legal documents.

- **Centrality of protection and humanitarian principles**, which guide the GCR and must be at the forefront of every COVID-19 response (para 5).

- **Identifying international protection needs**, including through the establishment of the **Asylum Capacity Support Group**: facilitates the capacity development of asylum systems, including offering technical and financial support (para 62). During the pandemic it has helped multiple States establish remote asylum procedures.

- **Emphasis on building data and evidence (Section 3.3)** is key to understanding refugees' rights issues, needs and inclusion/exclusion from national systems, both in general and particularly during the pandemic.

- **Naming relevant stakeholders:** adds explicit responsibility and opportunities for engagement

- **GRF pledges**, which are **'voluntary contributions** to achieve **collective outcomes and progress'**: Useful in terms of both content and collaboration (e.g. 'matches' may be made that might not otherwise have been; creates an opportunity to accelerate COVID-19-related pledges).

Refugee Protection and the GCR
Refugee protection is discussed throughout the GCR in addition to guiding its overall application (para 5). In Section 1.3 on Safety and Security, the provision of support for 'capacity development of relevant authorities, for instance on international refugee protection and exclusion criteria; strengthening of international efforts to prevent and combat sexual and gender-based violence, as well as trafficking and smuggling in persons' and other capacity development and safeguarding is discussed. In the face of COVID-19 and the rising protection issues mentioned in the previous section, strengthening such efforts are crucial.

The GCR sets out a provision (para 59) for addressing specific needs through additional resources and targeted assistance. It clearly states a variety of people with specific needs, such as children (including those who are unaccompanied or separated), persons with disabilities, those with medical needs, and those who are illiterate. [20] The explicit naming of each of these groups in the GCR provides the opportunity for advocacy and fundraising for additional resources for these populations today. Each of these groups is particularly vulnerable to the direct and secondary impacts of COVID-19 and their needs must be individually addressed in responses.

The missing language of the GCR
While informants expressed sympathy at the challenge of compiling a document containing myriad interests, there was also a level of concern regarding what the Compact didn't include and the effect it may have on addressing COVID-19 today. As one INGO informant shared,

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20 The full list is: 'children, including those who are unaccompanied or separated; women at risk; survivors of torture, trauma, trafficking in persons, sexual and gen- der-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse or harmful practices; those with medical needs; persons with disabilities; those who are illiterate; adolescents and youth; and older persons.' (para 59

The perspective [of the GCR] heavily took into account States' desires and wants because they [UNHCR] wanted them to sign the Compact…I had hoped there would be more of an insistence that this Compact is about life-saving protection, and not one about pleasing States and trying to get them on board…now more than ever we need protection mechanisms and partnerships that respond to needs.

> This perspective comes out more clearly when examining the language of the Compact, which contains 73 mentions of 'development' and only five mentions of 'asylum'. 'Freedom of movement' is not mentioned at all, and 'detention' is mentioned just once. While counting words alone is a fairly crude endeavor, this also translates into the type of pledges made at the GRF, which is understood as a key mechanism to implement the principles and objectives of the GCR. Some informants lauded the large number of pledges on education, but also noted the significantly fewer pledges on protection, resettlement, and other solutions that refugees badly need today. The risk, some felt, is that if the GRF is overly emphasized as a main goal or outcome of the GCR (when it is in fact one of many mechanisms within it), then important components of the GCR such as addressing refugee protection and solutions – indeed, those most aligned with UNHCR's core mandate as well as human rights instruments – may be neglected.

Approaches and Principles

'A multi-stakeholder and partnership approach'
The multi-stakeholder and partnership approach of the GCR, which supports whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches, has the potential to facilitate responses to COVID-19 and secondary impacts through addressing local situations in particular. In the face of constrained budgets and a growing focus on including displaced people in national system, these approaches will likely become even more important in the future. UNHCR's recent paper on the role of the GCR in the COVID-19 international response highlights refugees, the private sector, cities, and the UN system as several key actors important to engage in the pandemic response and recovery efforts.

The multi-stakeholder approach is also evident in other COVID-19 humanitarian responses. The strategic priorities and response approach of the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 clearly align with the GCR. In addition to containing the spread of COVID-19, the plan prioritises the protection, assistance, and advocacy for refugees, IDPs, migrants and vulnerable host communities as well as aims to decrease the 'deterioration of human assets and rights, social cohesion and livelihoods'. [21] It aims to have a whole-of-society approach guided by humanitarian principles, and emphasizes the 'importance of involving and supporting local organizations'. It also builds on the importance of local civil society, stating that, 'Given the current mobility restrictions, the role of local and community-based actors in the response is essential.' It further calls for coordination mechanisms to foster their participation to enable local actors' contributions 'to the understanding of the situation and needs as they evolve, and influence decisions on priorities and response at field level'. [22]

In interviews, particular attention was placed on the theme of refugee participation within the GCR and at the GRF. This was often optimistically linked to widening opportunities for localisation, now seen as increasingly important as the pandemic has dramatically shifted who works in-country and how that work is implemented. As one informant reflected,

> I do think that some of the conceptual underpinnings [of the GCR] are very helpful to us now. I think the Compact has helped increase the appreciation of the importance of meaningful participation of affected people, which we're now seeing even more clearly now. Now with Covid the understanding of refugees as frontline responders is so much more apparent than it was, in terms of them being both frontline, first, *and* final responders. In that way the timing of the GCR and the Forum was good, although there is still so much to work to do in terms of what it actually looks like. We can't work superficially on this: it needs to become embedded.

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21 UN (2020) Global Humanitarian Response Plan, COVID-19. UN Coordinated Appeal, April-December. p. 20. Available at: https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/ Global-Humanitarian-Response-Plan-COVID-19.pdf
22 UN (2020) Global Humanitarian Response Plan, COVID-19. UN Coordinated Appeal, April-December. p. 20. Available at: https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/ Global-Humanitarian-Response-Plan-COVID-19.pdf   UN (2020) p.23

Streamlined Assistance Delivery and National Inclusion
A further key approach relevant to the COVID-19 response today is the GCR's aim to avoid the creation of parallel systems of assistance. This goal maintains focus on easing the burden of host countries and highlights the importance of including refugees into national systems. Demonstrating its centrality, the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan cites 'access to national health system services' as the first enabling factor and condition for achieving its strategic priority of protection, assistance, and advocacy for refugees, IDPs, migrants, and vulnerable host communities. [23] In a similar vein, the World Bank discusses strengthening health services as an important policy for recovery in both the short- and long-term. [24]

> The GCR states that humanitarian assistance should, wherever possible, 'be delivered in a way that benefits both refugees and host communities. This will include efforts to deliver assistance through local and national service providers where appropriate (including through multipurpose cash assistance), instead of establishing parallel systems for refugees from which host communities do not benefit over time.' (GCR, para 66)

Through its focus on including refugees in national systems and streamlining assistance efforts through local and national service providers, the GCR can contribute to both response and recovery agendas. While limited, COVID-19 has accelerated inclusion in some countries. In Peru, for example, the Government issued a Legislative Decree (No. 1466) which temporarily opens up the subsidized health system to refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants for COVID-19 care, [25] while in Rwanda the national Community Based Health Insurance has been extended to urban refugees and refugee students studying in urban areas. [26] The importance of this cannot be widely enough emphasized, as explained by a resettled Syrian refugee informant in Berlin, Germany:

> First of all, you have to know that in Germany dealing with refugees in times of corona, they are treated exactly like the others. They are given the same deal like Germans themselves – this makes things much better for refugees because they are being dealt with in the same way as others.

However, it is clear that, given the duration of the pandemic, inclusion must also extend beyond health services. As one Senior Policy Advisor working in MENA stated,

> We are now moving from advocacy of the medical and preventive side of the pandemic to a longer-term analysis of how refugees will fit into these countries' contexts longer-term. If they are left out – excluded from policies and approaches meant to create social safety nets – then nobody wins. But if they are included, then issues of funding and resources becomes much more stark.

Reducing restrictions on national inclusion in spheres ranging from health to education to social safety nets to economies themselves are therefore key areas needed for further advocacy – as is advocacy for the funding to actualize this inclusion. This will likely only become more important as the pandemic continues to unfold, namely in developing and fragile contexts where service delivery was already overstretched or reduced. In so doing it connects to refugee rights as per the 1951 Convention, immediate refugee protection, and longer-term development agendas.

The GCR as a 'Gateway' to Rights-Based Advocacy
The GCR may also be able to serve as a gateway for discussing human rights and other binding protection instruments in particular countries. Some States – including major refugee-hosting countries – that have not, for example, signed on to the 1951 Convention were involved in drafting the GCR and did affirm it. Despite the Compact's non-binding nature, this opens important opportunities for protection-focused responses and advocacy channels for a variety of issues related to refugee protection. In cases this may directly relate to responding to the secondary protection impacts of the pandemic such as limited mobility, access to services, and the right to seek asylum.

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23 UN (2020) p.23
24 World Bank (2020) Global Economic Prospects, June 2020. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects
25 UNHCR (2020) Access to national services for vulnerable refugees in Peru. 26 June. Available at: https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/access-national-ser-vices-vulnerable-refugees-peru
26 UNHCR (2020) Health insurance in Rwanda: "The COVID-19 response is accessible to nationals and refugees alike". 24 June. Available at: https://globalcompactrefu-gees.org/article/health-insurance-rwanda-covid-19-response-accessible-nationals-and-refugees-alike

Connections Forged through the GCR Consultations, Drafting Process, and the GRF
A valuable component of the Compact appears to be the process leading up to it – the conversations held, the connections made, and the sheer level of investment in it from UNHCR, States, NGOs, the private sector, and other actors. As one INGO advocacy officer said, 'We put two years into this…into determining the language and fighting for the inclusion of issues…it was an enormous amount of effort. Now we have to use it!'

One civil society network leader explained that substantive off-the-record dialogues with member states and different bodies of the UN during the GCR drafting process means that connections forged then can be followed up on now. While not all of the interests and desires were ultimately reflected in the Compact, these discussions were documented and in cases provide important openings for civil society and other actors to revisit topics such as LGBTI protection or women's rights. As a different informant shared, 'A lot has come out of the process, so the issue is now to what extent can the positive momentum be maintained.'

Proposed mechanisms and structures

The GRF and related pledges were the most commonly cited mechanisms arising from the GCR in interviews, as they were perceived to be a key way to implement the GCR and maintain its relevance, particularly during the pandemic. As one UNHCR GRF Team member explained, 'When you look at the language of the GRF, it is mandated to the organisation [UNHCR] into perpetuity. It is really a machine to demonstrate the 'teeth' of the GCR, particularly the main principles and objectives of the Compact…now the success must come through the implementation…'

The temporal aspect of the GCR and GRF matters today because the momentum and connections forged creating both can, if harnessed, help maintain the relevance of the GCR in both rhetoric and practice. The structures set out in the GCR, as previously discussed, provide key touchstones to maintain progress on the GCR and the GRF pledges. Connections and possible collaborations through GRF pledges may help actualize or expedite important relevant programmes for COVID-19 or future crises; UNHCR has sought to demonstrate this through compiling relevant pledges and offering targeted support to particular high-value pledges in areas such as health, protection, and jobs and livelihoods.

Other structures such as the Support Platforms may also offer new channels for managing crises. An employee of the IGAD Support Platform discussed the quick convening of meetings around ensuring refugees' access to healthcare in IGAD Member States, which may not have occurred as easily had the Support Platform not existed. The diverse members of the IGAD Support Platform, including the IGAD Secretariat, the World Bank, UNHCR, and several donor states – also meant that discussions around funding, programme timeline adjustments, and the shifting of particular activities to address COVID-19 were possible in ways they might not have otherwise been. For example, in March 2020 IGAD convened heads of IGAD States in an extraordinary summit to discuss including refugees in national responses. It was agreed by all states that refugees would be treated in local hospitals, and would receive the same quality of treatment as nationals. Such agreements could be further built on by the platform itself.

> **Key GCR Arrangements & Opportunities**
>
> - Follow-up meetings and briefs (Regular GRF, biennial high-level officials' meetings, UN High Commissioner's annual update): ongoing opportunities for engagement and accountability, way to maintain momentum on key GCR objectives
>
> - Support Platforms: chance for regional, coordinated action to take place
>
> - GCR Digital Platform: chance to forge partnerships on shared issues identified through pledges, match pledges, learn and stay updated on pledges

While increased channels for communication and mobilisation may be created through the Support Platforms, there has also been worry that these platforms lack the capacity to adequately undertake the scope of work envisioned, and that their efficacy will likely be significantly constrained if sizeable additional resources and capacity are not provided. This reinforces the need for both multi-stakeholder engagement and sustained funding to enable Support Platforms to fulfil their intended functions.

The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)
As laid out in the 2016 New York Declaration, the CRRF presents a vision for more predictable and more comprehensive responses to refugee crises. It was piloted in 15 countries in 2017 and 2018, and helped inform the GCR. While in some ways the GCR changed and broadened from this initial focus, the CRRF comprises Part II of the Compact and 'constitutes an integral part' of it.[27] It is envisioned to be applied through Part III of the GCR, the Programme of Action. This is meant to entail global, regional, and national complementary action.

The GRF offers a clear example of a global arrangement for international cooperation, as do the Support Platforms at the national and regional level. What is often less clear is what this action looks like at sub-regional and local or camp-specific levels. However, it is often at these more micro levels that action becomes tangible and tailored. Some informants working in CRRF countries in East Africa suggested that gaps in action plans at this stage made it difficult for the CRRF to adapt and be relevant to addressing COVID-19. At the same time, some of the platforms and mechanisms created, such as country CRRF Secretariats, offer means for additional coordination, planning, and advocacy around refugee issues to take place.

Relevant functions of the Support Platforms to address COVID-19 and its impacts:

- Galvanize political commitment and advocacy for prevention, protection, response and solutions;
- Mobilize financial, material and technical assistance, as well as resettlement and complementary pathways for admission;
- Facilitate coherent humanitarian and development responses, including through the early and sustained engagement of development actors;
- Support comprehensive policy initiatives to ease pressure on host countries, build resilience and self-reliance, and find solutions.

(Summarized from GCR, para 23)

The Implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)

One example of a local action plan that implements the CRRF and by extension the GCR is the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISDEP) in Turkana West, Kenya. Phase one of the plan runs from 2018-2022 and has eight key components including WASH, Protection, and Health. The Kalobeyei Settlement was created in 2015 to accommodate rising numbers of inhabitants in the Kakuma Refugee Camps. The settlement is premised upon key aims of the GCR, including fostering refugee self-reliance and increasing integrated service delivery to refugees and host community members. It is considered an example of the implementation of the Compact in Eastern Africa and the Horn.

Under the framework of KISDEP, refugees have access to specialized health services outside the settlements and camps while host communities can also access services within them. A coordinated health response by the Kenyan Ministry of Health, UNHCR, and other actors led to a successful controlling of two cholera outbreaks in 2017 and 2018 amongst both refugee and host communities. One key approach of this component is to promote community-based responses to prevent transmission through recruiting and training local community health promoters to spread health messages and mobilise community members for vaccinations. This coordination is being utilized once again to address COVID-19. International partners such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa have also invested in the Kalobeyei Health Facility, which is seen as playing an integral role in preventing COVID-19 outbreaks in the settlement and surrounding areas.

Through the coordination mechanisms in place for each component of the development plan, as well as due in part to past experience in mobilizing around recent health emergencies, Kalobeyei and the surrounding areas may be able to better address COVID-19 and its effects through tangible translation of the GCR to the local context if the necessary investment and resources are provided

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27 GCR, Part II. P4

V. THE USE OF THE GCR IN RHETORIC

What is the GCR?

Throughout this research there was a variety of definitions of the GCR provided by interview informants. For some it is a technical or protection instrument, while for others it is seen as an advocacy document or an attempt to create a more coherent support system of refugee assistance involving a range of stakeholders. And for others it is simply a recommitment to the 1951 Refugee Convention. For one member of a major international humanitarian agency it didn't actually matter if the language of the GCR was ever used as long as the principles and commitments within it were adhered to. These varying definitions matter for two main reasons:

- The lack of coherence in defining the GCR demonstrates a broader confusion about how the GCR is actually meant to be implemented. While some aspects of it are very specific, such as the creation of the GRF, Support Platform, and ACSG, in other areas it remains too general to refer to alone.

- This generality and the lack of specific definitions for terms such as 'self-reliance' (on one hand likely necessary for a global document) can however offer benefits in times of crisis like COVID-19, when understandings of terms or the needs that specific mechanisms can meet may quickly change. At the same time, it is evident that the GCR as a standalone document may have limited long-term utility without detailed action and implementation plans tailored to cities, settlements, camps, and regions. While informants often referred to the GCR as a guide, many are still looking for the tools to make use of it.

The limited presence of the GCR in COVID-19 documents

NGO and UNHCR statements, press releases, reports, and policy briefs relating to COVID-19 and the GCR have mainly invoked it as a protection instrument and an advocacy tool for responsibility-sharing. For example, a recent UN policy brief entitled 'COVID-19 and People on the Move' mentions the GCR only twice but makes clear that it plays a key role in upholding global responsibility-sharing:

> The four basic tenets offered by this Brief are underpinned by our collective commitment to ensure that the responsibility for protecting the world's refugees is equitably shared and that human mobility remains safe, inclusive, and respects international human rights and refugee law, as envisaged not least by the Global Compacts... [28]

Notably, the first edition of the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 did not mention the GCR specifically despite clear alignment with it. This was subsequently made explicit in its July 2020 updated plan, which reads, 'The refugee response is led by host governments and supported by UNHCR in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and relying on existing coordination structures.' [29]

The GCR is commonly framed as a way to 'remind' audiences of commitments or pledges made by States or other actors. For instance, an UNHCR statement on Uganda's reception of Congolese refugees ended with,

> UNHCR has received just 18 per cent of the US$357 million required for its operation in Uganda. UNHCR appeals for international solidarity to help Uganda uphold its commitments towards the Global Compact on Refugees and maintain its progressive refugee policy during these difficult times. [30]

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28 UN (2020) COVID-19 and People on the Move. Policy Brief. Available at: https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/sg_policy_brief_on_peop-le_on_the_move.pdf

29 UN (2020) UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19. P. 87. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHRP-COVID19_July_up-date_0.pdf

30 UNHCR (2020) Uganda provides a safe haven to DRC refugees amid COVID-19 lockdown. 1 July. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2020/7/5efca8d64/uganda-provides-safe-haven-drc-refugees-amid-covid-19-lockdown.html

Further, a joint UNICEF-UNHCR statement read,

> UNHCR and UNICEF collaborate in more than 40 countries around the world and we are working together to see commitments made for children under the Global Compact for Refugees realized. We will continue to provide the best possible support to all refugee children during the COVID pandemic and beyond, and we urge governments and the international community to join us in these efforts. [31]

This usage of the GCR was reinforced by informants. As one civil society network leader explained of the Compact, 'Wherever we can we remind States - here's what you signed on to. In a way the fact it doesn't speak to the crisis of the moment makes it easier because it means that there's more scope for interpretation.'

When the GCR is used in documents, it often appears in just one sentence, as illustrated above, and sometimes alongside other frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals. The LERRN Network has used it, for example, as one of several 'policy-based sources of localisation', stating,

> Localisation efforts have gained momentum since the World Humanitarian Summit (2016), alongside other international platforms and commitments, including the Charter for Change (2015), the Grand Bargain (2016), and the Global Compact on Refugees (2018). Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the essential role local actors play in responding to the crisis. [32]

Its inclusion alongside other policy tools suggests that, despite its non-binding nature, it can be useful as one tool among many to make cases for issues ranging from localisation to healthcare access.

However, in press releases, reports, policy briefs, response plans, and other UN, INGO, and NGO documents relating to COVID-19 and refugees, there is limited reference to the GCR. More often than not, the GCR is not mentioned in documents on COVID-19 at all – even in instances where it could be relevant.

For example, a global rapid assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on displaced LGBTQI persons presents four urgent recommendations to government policymakers – 'Uphold the right to asylum; resume the resettlement of LGBTQI refugees; release LGBTQI asylum-seekers being held in detention centres; and increase resources dedicated to supporting LGBTQI refugees' [33] – which embody key tenets if not core principles of the Compact itself. While a link to the GCR is included in 'Further Resources', the report makes no explicit mention of the Compact in the text. Unfortunately, this absence is all too common in documents on a range of relevant topics to the GCR, such as the inability to seek asylum, the urgent protection of those with specific needs as cited in the Compact, and calls for greater support of major refugee-hosting countries.

In some instances the GCR may not be seen as a relevant instrument, while in others its relative newness may somewhat counterintuitively make it seem less relevant as it has not yet become grounded in convention in the way of the 1951 Convention, the development goals, and human rights instruments. For many humanitarian actors, the 'emergency mode' that the pandemic necessitated meant that frameworks such as the GCR were not at the forefront of minds.

One of the few reports on COVID-19 that explicitly mentions the GCR is by Plan International, an INGO focused on women's and girls' rights. [34] In the report, which examines the impact of COVID-19 on displaced and refugee girls and young women, a dedicated section discusses the role of the GCR and the international community in the COVID-19 response, with an emphasis on the Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) lens that the Compact promotes. Both the GCR and GRF pledges are presented as ways to support refugees, particularly girls and young women, in the pandemic response. It is noted that:

> There are very few examples of specific consultations and assessments that focus on the capacities, vulnerabilities and opportunities of adolescent girls living in refugee camps or settlements. The GCR promotes gender equality and meaningful engagement of refugee women and girls and it is essential that this translates into action on the ground. (p5)

31 UNICEF-UNHCR (2020) As COVID-19 pandemic continues, forcibly displaced children need more support than ever. 20 April. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2020/4/5e9d4c044/covid-19-pandemic-continues-forcibly-displaced-children-need-support.html
32 LERRN Network (2020) Opportunities and Challenges for Localisation of Humanitarian Action in Tanzania. Local Engagement Refugee Research Network Paper No. 8. Available at: https://covid19.alnap.org/help-library/opportunities-and-challenges-for-localisation-of-humanitarian-action-in-tanzania
33 Rainbow Railroad (2020) The Impact of COVID-19 on Displaced LGBTQI Persons.
34 Plan-International (2020) Close to Contagion: The Impacts of Covid-19 on Displaced and Refugee Girls and Young Women. Geneva: Plan.

A highlighted quote indirectly emphasises the global responsibility-sharing framework of the Compact, reading, 'COVID-19 is a global crisis and needs an international and co-ordinated response.' (p5) Through both the global and local angle, as well as the AGD lens, the report captures important elements of the Compact and the current challenge of translating global responsibility-sharing pledges and the fulfilling of the Compact's objectives into a reality locally around the world. It also demonstrates how mainstreaming the GCR can support organisations' work as related to the pandemic as well as broader thematic areas of focus.

The Relevance of the GCR as a Non-Binding Document
One key factor to consider in the use or non-use of the GCR both rhetorically and in practice is its non-binding nature, which may affect which regions it is most widely taken up in.[35] In some regions of the world it may set higher standards for refugee rights and protection than currently exists, so could improve existing standards if it is enforced. One informant in India suggested that the GCR could be an important advocacy tool for protection and rights, as the Government of India was involved in the process and has affirmed it – despite lacking a domestic law for managing asylum and not being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. In other regions the GCR may be perceived as a less valuable protection instrument due to the availability of other binding legal rights frameworks to draw on.

The European Union (EU), for example, has strong legal standards embodied in the EU legal order and the Convention regime, and at national levels. Due to these frameworks being legally binding, they are preferred over the GCR when advocating for refugees' rights and States' responsibilities. One head of a legal network on refugees and asylum seekers felt that,

> The GCR makes no difference in the EU for good and bad reasons…it is not that relevant. Any advocacy you do, you can add in a little bit, or when you're taking a legal approach you can add reference to the Compact to argue for changes. We have done this in past. Perhaps it's better to have it than not but it's not hugely important. What would really change an amendment or combative proposal is to invoke, for example, the convention on child rights and demonstrate how it is being violated.

However, perspectives vary. In a recent piece by the PROTECT consortium on the GCR, legal scholars Professor Elspeth Guild and Kathryn Allinson write, 'In the face of continued State disregard for the rights of refugees and the shift by UNHCR towards programmatic, rather than legal standards, the GCR, and by extension the 1951 Convention, must be utilized to ensure greater responsibility is taken for the protection of refugee's rights by states.' [36]

One issue raised in regard to the EU and the GCR was how the pandemic might accelerate the EU's externalization agenda and in fact how the GCR might be used to deflect States' responsibilities. As one informant explained,

> The concern we've raised from the beginning of the GCR process is that the EU will support countries to implement the Compact but will not apply it itself. While we can hold on to the question of universality and use the SDGs as a positive example to argue that the same standards should apply globally, the issue is in the actual implementation of the compact.

Similarly, an informant of an international humanitarian agency stated,

> Of course we have more tools if it is binding, but most important at this point is that the GCR gets anchored in what countries do, in national legislation, inter-ministerial operations, and internal UNHCR uptake. This work is the most critical: like the SDGs, how do we get it mainstreamed at the country level…

As these quotes illustrate, implementing the GCR must remain the primary focus, while ramping up advocacy and mainstreaming is all the more pressing as the pandemic continues to divert attention and resources.

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35 For a fuller discussion of the non-binding nature of the GCR, see: Triggs, G. and Wall, P. (2020) 'The Makings of a Success': The Global Compact on Refugees and the Inaugural Global Refugee Forum. International Journal of Refugee Law. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeaa024
36 Guild, E. & Allinson, K. (2020) The impact of the Global Compact on Refugees on the legal protection of refugee rights: What now for the 1951 Refugee Convention? PROTECT. Available at: https://protectproject.w.uib.no/what-now-for-the-1951-refugee-convention/

VI. THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GCR

'Delays' and 'absent' were two main words used by interview informants when discussing the extent to which the COVID-19 crisis is leading to changes in the implementation of the Compact. Most INGO, NGO, and country office UNHCR staff interviewed felt that the GCR and related frameworks and mechanisms have largely been 'left off the table' in the months since the pandemic began. At the same time, there has been notable enthusiasm by some in supporting the ongoing implementation of the GCR, with France for example calling it a 'priority' and remaining committed to fulfilling its pledges. [37] There have also been a significant number of UNHCR briefings and meetings held about the GCR and GRF since the pandemic began. [38] However, there appears to be a contrast between the number of discussions at the so-called 'global level' occurring regarding the GCR and the pandemic, and the limited extent to which the GCR is being discussed and utilized at local and national levels, and within organisations themselves. This may reflect an important gap in organizational and inter-agency communication and uptake of the GCR at different levels that should be comprehensively addressed as part of the focus on implementing the Compact.

A shift to short-term emergency assistance
There was a sense from many NGO informants that the order of priorities during the initial lockdowns in March and April 2020 shifted significantly to short-term emergency health. Some cited challenges to maintain organisational focus even on very pandemic-relevant areas like social protection, defined here as activities designed to reduce populations' poverty, vulnerability, or risk. In this context, many felt that the refugee regime tools, including the GCR, weren't being utilized, and that there was a lack of strong advocacy to do so. 'A lot of people [humanitarians] are burnt out,' one INGO informant explained, 'We are having to choose which policy battles to fight with limited time. Now that there is a normalization of COVID-19, maybe it will become easier to bring in other foci and tools. Yet there is a risk with everything being put on hold. We risk losing the credibility of mechanisms like the GCR if we aren't using them.'

Even within UNHCR at country level it appears difficult to maintain many of the GCR and GRF approaches due to the pandemic. One informant in East Africa shared that UNHCR at country level appeared to be enacting a solely COVID-19-focused emergency response, which entailed creating parallel responses and structures that were not in line with the GCR's multi-stakeholder approach. For several other informants it was similarly disconcerting to see longer-term processes and solutions being de-prioritised due to a lack of capacity, despite the ongoing need for them.

The CRRF Secretariat in Uganda has recently written an issues paper highlighting the effects of COVID-19 on refugee responses in the country. Key issues to address are border closures that limit asylum space, the closing of schools and ensuing child protection and child labour issues, and limited livelihoods for refugees. The Secretariat suggests that ways to address these includes ensuring that international partners are aligning their responses with national coordination mechanisms at district and other levels that host governments' have set up to deal with the pandemic – essentially the government-led response that the GCR advocates through its multi-stakeholder approach.

Exacerbating a funding gap and restricted responsibility-sharing
The pandemic also risks exacerbating a longer-standing gap between discourse and action as countries turn 'inward' to deal with their own crises. This has resulted in significant funding shortfalls to address both COVID-19-related and other needs. [39] At the time of writing, the 2020 humanitarian appeals were less than 30% funded, with the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan just 25% funded. [40] Other long-term solutions-oriented responses are markedly lower, such as a 95% shortfall in the funding of the 2020 South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan. [41] The lack of funding allocated to refugee response plans (RRPs) hinders the progress of the GCR as, 'In the spirit of the GCR, the 2020 RRPs seek to integrate a solutions approach placing greater emphasis on self-reliance and resilience and aligning the refugee response with other humanitarian and development country programmes.' [42]

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37 See: https://twitter.com/franceonu/status/1273648744806985729?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
There have been, for example, three informal briefings on the GRF and a fourth is upcoming, alongside a range of other regular meetings and regional discussions with NGO and other stakeholders focused on the pandemic response. A summary of discussions from the second informal briefing in June 2020 can be found here: https://www.unhcr.org/5ef1c1094.pdf and other materials are available online.

38 There have been, for example, three informal briefings on the GRF and a fourth is upcoming, alongside a range of other regular meetings and regional discussions with NGO and other stakeholders focused on the pandemic response. A summary of discussions from the second informal briefing in June 2020 can be found here: https://www.unhcr.org/5ef1c1094.pdf and other materials are available online.

39 ICVA (2020) NGO Statement: virtual ExCom briefing on UNHCR's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 3 June. Available at: https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/NGO%20Statement-COVID-ExCom-briefing-03062020-FINAL.pdf

40 UNOCHA (2020) Humanitarian aid contributions 2020. Financial Tracking Service. Available at: https://fts.unocha.org/

41 UNOCHA (2020) South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan 2020 (Regional response plan). Financial Tracking Service. Available at: https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/947/summary

42 UNHCR (2020) Global Appeal 2020-2021. Geneva: UNHCR. Page 44. Available at: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/ga2020/pdf/Global_Appeal_2020_full_lowres.pdf

In addition to funding gaps restricting crucial programme implementation, there is a risk of fatigue in hosting countries and an associated disinterest or disillusionment with the GCR process if GCR commitments are not followed through on. As one member of the CRRF Secretariat explained,

> Countries around the world are turning inwards but this is an issue that must be looked at more holistically because we all know that refugees are an international obligation – 1.5 million refugees are not an obligation for Uganda. More refugees continue to come from DRC and South Sudan, but the international community has decided to keep quiet and say that Uganda has solutions for refugees. But now we are saying that we are confronted with a challenge. We are a poor country and it is time for the international community to wake up…this is a puzzle for the global community to think about. [43]

Similar to many countries in the world, [44] countries in East Africa have closed their borders, including to refugees and asylum seekers. In June a coalition of international, national, and refugee-led organisations in the Horn, East and Central Africa called on governments in the region to put appropriate health measures in place and to reopen borders for asylum seekers in compliance with the right to seek asylum as well as the principle of non-refoulement. 39 organisations publically supported the press release, including international organisations like Oxfam International, the International Rescue Committee, and the Jesuit Refugee Service. Other international organisations, however, decided against it despite agreeing with it in principle. One member of an INGO explained that in addition to not wanting to undermine the public health message, the organisation was reluctant to sign on to a statement advocating for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to open their borders when Europe wasn't:

> I don't see these essentially Western constructed mechanism or protocols having any practical significance to governments in the region. Especially if they're not funded. While countries have signed on to the Compact, what we're seeing is that at the end of the day, they are reverting to focusing internally. I don't think governments in East Africa and the Horn will respond well to Western countries telling them to do otherwise when the West itself isn't. The message of the US buying up drugs is clearly seen, and if that continues governments here will likely say: Don't talk to us about solidarity when you are not thinking globally yourselves.

A recent illustration cited by several informants of both protection issues and the discrepancy in how many donor States conceive their role in responsibility-sharing is the UK's handling of increased migrant crossings – many of whom are asylum seekers. After over 150 people recently arrived irregularly from France, Britain's minister for immigration compliance, Chris Philip, stated that the Channel will be made 'unviable' for those seeking to cross over,[45] in part through appointing a former Royal Marine as 'clandestine Channel threat commander'. According to the UK Home Office, the measures to be taken include 'stronger enforcement measures, interceptions at sea, and the direct return of boats'. [46] This decision is seen by many as an unlawful and unnecessary military response to a humanitarian situation.

Reflecting on this issue, one NGO informant stated that it is 'not an accident that this action is taking place now', citing COVID-19 as providing permission for restrictive measures to become even further ingrained. It was noted by a researcher on asylum that in addition to combatting such blatant disregard for the principle of responsibility-sharing, the revitalization of global commitments to serve and protect refugees – what is in theory the GCR – must also reimagine how the Global North uses the individual process of seeking and granting asylum, and systematically work to address this unequal employment of responsibility-sharing. To this effect, there could be great value in ensuring that the Asylum Capacity Support Group includes this examination as part of its work to uphold the principles of 'fairness, efficiency, adaptability, and/or integrity' in asylum systems. [47]

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43 In April 2020 the World Bank announced a 148.2 million USD investment to improve Uganda's Forest Management and support communities, including refugees. 70 million USD of this was a grant, including from the International Development Association's (IDA18) sub-window for refugees and host communities. However this project aims to finance infrastructure and equipment for management and conservation, as well as further develop tourism infrastructure, rather than address the added pressure that COVID-19 has placed on infrastructure such as health facilities and schools, which refugees also access. The World Bank's press release is available here: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/23/world-bank-invests-1482-million-to-improve-ugandas-forest-management-and-provide-benefits-to-communities-including-refugees

44 At the time that this report was written, over 93% of the global population was living in countries with travel restrictions related to COVID-19. Source: New York Times (2020) Coronavirus Travel Restrictions, Across the Globe. 16 July. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-travel-restrictions.html

45 The Guardian (2020) Channel will be made 'unviable' for illegal crossings, says immigration minister – video. 11 August. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/video/2020/aug/11/channel-will-be-made-unviable-for-illegal-crossings-immigration-minister-video

46 The Guardian (2020) More than 4,000 have crossed Channel to UK in small boats this year. 9 August. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/aug/09/number-migrants-crossing-channel-uk-passes-4000-this-year

47 UNHCR (n.d.) Asylum Capacity Support Group: Note for Discussion. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/5cc1aba44.pdf

Informants across sectors are also concerned that the current dearth of resettlement to Western countries and ongoing border restrictions are setting a new norm of asylum that will have a problematic ripple effect. One risk is that those countries hosting the majority of the world's refugees become much less tolerant of them. As one INGO informant asked, 'Why should Uganda open its border if Norway isn't even opening its borders to Swedes, much less refugees?'

A delay in the timeline of GRF pledges – and ongoing enthusiasm
Almost all of the NGO and private sector informants which made pledges at the GRF found that a combination of practical constraints – chief among them limited travel and staff, permission to operate in host countries, and struggles to communicate or access beneficiaries – and the sheer diversion of time and energy to address COVID-19 meant that pledges were either on hold or reduced in scope.

However, most informants remained optimistic about fulfilling pledges, reiterating their commitment while acknowledging that the pledge may look slightly different than planned. And some have even successfully adjusted their scope or focus to quickly address health and other needs that the pandemic has brought to the fore. UNHCR's tracking of pledges paints a positive picture: out of 314 voluntary updates received on the status of pledges, 70% are in-progress, while 20% have already been fulfilled, and 10% are being prepared. [48] At the same time, given that 1,400 pledges were made, this is admittedly only a small picture of the current status of progress.

The heightened importance of COVID-19-relevant GRF pledges
One way that the GCR may prove useful in mitigating a prolonged emergency response is through the acceleration of particular COVID-19 relevant GRF pledges. Another is the way that some pledges have raised the visibility of needs in a way that has already encouraged support for addressing the impacts of the pandemic. One example of this is the work of the Collaboration Cash Delivery (CCD) Network Colombia, which includes eight NGO members which operate in nine regions. A GRF pledge made by World Vision Colombia on behalf of the CCD Network Colombia aims to streamline the work of organisations offering cash distribution. The pledge seeks to further harmonize the organisations' eligibility criteria, risk analysis, and risk assessments, as well as collaborate for large-scale funding. One NGO member of the CCD Network Colombia described the transfer to distributing cash at the onset of the pandemic as occurring more quickly, and that it was easier to approach donors due to the visibility of both the topic and the pledge through the GRF. 'While we didn't receive a lot more money after the pledge,' the NGO informant explained, 'it has helped us put cash out as a tool for responding to COVID-19 in Colombia. It's definitely been easier for us to call out our donors to help with cash, and they've been open to adapting grants to incorporate in cash distribution.'

Private Sector GRF Pledge Snapshot: IKEA Group, Ingka Group, and Inter IKEA Group

A key relevant stakeholder mentioned in the Compact is the private sector, which has received heightened attention as a relevant assistance actor from both UNHCR and within the wider humanitarian system over the last years. However, as budgets tighten amidst a global recession, it is critical to examine how private sector involvement in both funding and implementation may change. One of the most prominent private sector actors within refugee assistance is IKEA, which through its three bodies – Inter IKEA Group, Ingka Group, and the IKEA Foundation – made its largest commitment to date at the Global Refugee Forum (see side box).

- 'The **IKEA Foundation** commits EUR 100 million in grants over five years for programmes that help refugees and their hosting communities improve their incomes and become more self-reliant.'
- The **Inter Ikea Group** pledges to create a '+400% volume/sales of IKEA textile range made by refugees and local women in Jordan', thereby contributing to 'sustainable livelihoods for 400 women' in partnership with the Jordan River Foundation.
- The **Ingka Group** pledges to equip and qualify refugees to 'find a job at IKEA or in other companies. By 2022, we plan to support 2,500 refugees through job training and language skills initiatives in 300 IKEA stores and units in 30 countries by 2022.'

Source: IKEA Pledges, Global Compact on Refugees Digital Platform

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48 These figures came from an UNHCR in August 2020. A summary of the pledges as of June 2020 can be found here: UNHCR (2020) Follow-Up to the Global Refugee Forum: Second Informal Briefing Summary. 11 June. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/5ef1c1094.pdf

An IKEA Foundation co-worker explained about the GRF, 'Although all three of us already were working on supporting refugees, with or without the GRF, engaging in the process allowed us to amplify our impact and be more thoughtful about how we link.'

The effects of the pandemic on the resulting pledges, which address different economic areas ranging from the supply chain to creating jobs for refugees in retail, have led some within the IKEA Foundation to conclude that COVID-19 has exposed now more than ever refugees' needs for both jobs and social protection. This recognition will inform IKEA Foundation's forthcoming strategic plan with the aim that globally more donors – and, crucially, States – will be encouraged to similarly support refugees.

VII. LOOKING AHEAD: RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND IMPLICATIONS

It has become what one informant described a 'national sport in the NGO world' to foresee what changes may occur in the humanitarian system due to the pandemic and its associated effects. At the same time, looking ahead is crucial as organisations, institutions, and individuals alike seek to understand the adaptations necessary for the future ahead. When it comes to the GCR, a variety of implications emerge, though few that seem set in stone. In particular, there is a risk of short-term, acute considerations undermining development and solutions-oriented approaches promoted by the GCR, such as addressing the socioeconomic needs of refugees and host communities. Key concerns that emerged from interviews included a derogation of women's rights and protection, fears that long-term impacts on livelihoods could lead to rises in prostitution and other forms of exploitation, and a lack of focus on safe conditions in countries of origin.

The long-term viability of the Compact also appears threatened by current and projected budget cuts to the UN, NGOs, and broader humanitarian world. At the same time, the importance of the Compact's emphasis on responsibility-sharing has been put into sharp relief amid a discouraging plethora of border closures and rising xenophobia. Funding cuts and fewer resources also highlight the need for the Compact itself – because of less funding, it is imperative to think of interventions which both address acute and longer-term needs holistically. Recent trends emphasize the need to create durable solutions and support sustainable interventions including access to sustainable livelihoods for refugees. The following sections examine the risks, opportunities, and implications of the pandemic to the GCR, as well as explore some related elements that will continue to affect it.

Protection

Protection issues were cited by informants across countries as one of the most prominent short-term impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. These spanned the 'timeline' of displacement, including a lack of access to territory and asylum, a lack of upholding refugee rights and protection during displacement, limited solutions due to the halting of resettlement and voluntary repatriation programmes, and ongoing restricted opportunities for local integration. In a statement[49] at the Standing Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in July, Gillian Triggs, the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, summarized the situation well:

> We have learned a great deal from the COVID-19 pandemic; the initial optimism of last December has faded a little; commitments to the Compact's principles of solidarity and responsibility and burden sharing have waivered among some governments. The global challenge is to maintain the momentum of the Compact and Forum and to reinvigorate State commitments to international solidarity and protection for refugees and all those who are internally displaced or stateless.

Access to territory and asylum
Main protection issues raised by informants were limited asylum space and a related waning of interest in responsibility-sharing. Lack of political will and leadership was discussed as a key concern driving these protection challenges. These were seen as both short-term and longer-term problems, with immediate impacts already apparent, such as asylum seekers being refused entry into host countries. As one head of a legal NGO shared regarding protection issues caused by COVID-19,

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49 Triggs, G. (2020) Remarks by Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 7 July. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/admin/dipstatements/5f0576384/remarks-assistant-high-commissioner-protection-78th-meeting-standing-committee.html

> From our perspective [in Europe] the biggest challenge we have is access to territory. This was a challenge before, and COVID-19 has exacerbated it. Using legal advocacy methods to try to stop Covid accelerating is bolstering the EU's tendency to prevent people from actually accessing territory. Currently it is not even a question of access to procedure (though that is also a challenge but less complicated) – it's actually physical legal access to territory that we're struggling to obtain. The GCR could be useful in this. In general what we need is a strong statement and strong work from UNHCR and IOM, and then also from the European Commission, the courts, anybody with any power to not allow states to use Covid to limit access to territory with impunity. To either insist, put pressure, use whatever tool available to remove the barriers to access – and also make it so problematic that States decide not to continue it.

The ongoing example of police violence in Croatia against asylum seekers and other migrants at the border of Bosnia[50] was cited as occurring with the tacit agreement of the EU and the 'off the record support of people'. This is seen as taking place largely with impunity and as part of a larger trend of illegal pushbacks occurring on external borders of the EU. '[In this situation] the Compact could be used as an additional reference point, an additional tool,' one NGO informant shared, 'in particular if it is used by UNHCR to make sure they remain robust on this question of access.'

Refoulement
Further fears expressed regarding protection surrounded the fourth objective of the GCR, that of creating enabling conditions for voluntary repatriation to occur. While this objective can be used to focus on addressing root causes of displacement, it is also seen as a problematic gateway for repatriation to take place prematurely. As host countries continue to struggle to address needs related to COVID-19, as well as the needs caused by the virus directly, refoulement remains an issue, with the pandemic used as either an excuse or a distraction.[51] One employee of a child-centred INGO shared, 'Forcible child returns are occurring on the pretext of health risks. The need for durable solutions is ongoing, but is not being focused on.'[52] A worry as connected to the GCR is that in cases these returns may take place under the guise of successfully meeting the fourth objective focusing on voluntary return – and even with the blessing of UNHCR and other actors.

An opportunity or a setback to development?

While some feel that long-sought after development goals such as the inclusion of refugees in national systems may be more quickly realised due to the needs exposed by COVID-19, others fear long-term development setbacks. The United Nations Development Program estimates, for example, a sharp decline in human development – a combination of education, health, and living standards – already in 2020, which would be 'equivalent to erasing all the progress in human development of the past six years'. [53]

However, one key area that the pandemic and related crises appear to be accelerating in some countries is the inclusion of refugees into healthcare and social protection system. At the same time, restrictions on 'non-essential' programming have had immediate deleterious effects that many foresee having wide-ranging long-term effects, as well.

Social Protection
There has been growing advocacy from a diverse body of actors ranging from the World Bank[54] to Mayors around the world[55] for the inclusion of refugees and migrants in national social protection programmes. Given this, the growing practice of linking humanitarian safety nets to national social protection systems may be one area of ongoing acceleration and success. This in turn works towards the GCR aim of the inclusion of forcibly displaced people. As one international humanitarian agency informant explained,

50 Amnesty International (2020) Croatia: Fresh evidence of police abuse and torture of migrants and asylum-seekers. 11 June. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/croatia-fresh-evidence-of-police-abuse-and-torture-of-migrants-and-asylumseekers/

51 Ghezelbash, D. (2020) COVID-19 and the end of asylum. Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, 'COVID-19 Watch' Series. Available at: https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/publication/covid-19-and-end-asylum

52 For recent research on the forced return of asylum seekers and migrants, see: Bhabha, J. & Digidki, V. (2020) Child Repatriation in the Time of COVID-19. Rethinking Refuge, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. Available at: https://www.rethinkingrefuge.org/articles/child-repatriation-in-the-time-of-covid-19

53 UNDP (2020) COVID-19 and Human Development: Assessing the Crisis, Envisioning the Recovery. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/covid-19_and_human_development_0.pdf

54 Testaverde, M. (2020) Social protection for migrants during the COVID-19 crisis: The right and smart choice. 28 April. Voices, World Bank Blogs. Available at: https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/social-protection-migrants-during-covid-19-crisis-right-and-smart-choice?cid=spl_tt_splabor_en_ext

55 UNHCR-PHAP (2020) Webinar: Inclusive COVID1-9 Responses of Cities in the Americas. 30 July. Available at: https://phap.org/PHAP/Events/OEV2020/OEV200730.aspx; UNHCR (2020) Cities and Municipalities' inclusive responses in the face of COVID-19. Available at: https://globalcompactrefugees.org/index.php/article/cities-and-municipalities-inclusive-responses-face-covid-19

In terms of refugees and social protection, it's critical we talk about three things. First, understanding the starting point, the state of both the humanitarian system in particular countries and the national social protection system. Second, understanding the destination we're trying to get to: national system inclusion. Lastly, it's putting together an action plan and bringing on board the actors to do this. If we're able to include people in national systems, then we're getting protection dividends, we're getting solutions, and we're supporting self-reliance. We're putting bones on the GCR – that's the process.

To this end, the work of multilateral agencies in managing major safety nets through cash-based assistance running in parallel, alignment, or as part of national social protection systems may become a core area of work, with the emphasis on the streamlining of systems to benefit forcibly displaced people and vulnerable host country citizens alike. One informant based in Geneva foresees that the further mainstreaming of the GCR will start to shift the profile of UNHCR's partnerships, with less dependence on NGOs and more engagement with the public sectors and other organisations that have the ability to integrate persons of concern into social safety nets.

Restrictions on 'non-essential' programming
There appears to be a real risk of funding and attention on the emergency humanitarian needs brought on by COVID-19 at the expense of longer-term protection, solutions, and development programmes that are also integral to addressing it. While this should not be an either/or choice, in compliance with orders from host state governments, many non-essential humanitarian programmes have been put on hold. One agency operating in Lebanon, for example, has had to stop important longer-term assistance including the capacity-building of local authorities and frontline workers and infrastructure support to Lebanese host communities, including schools. In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, women's centres which provided both community spaces and access to family planning are unable to open. The halting of these 'non-essential' programmes will likely have huge long-term impacts in addition to going against key tenets of the Compact.

A further example of COVID-19-related delays of a programme implementing critical aspects of the CRRF is the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) project on refugee-led organisations (RLOs) in Kakuma refugee camp and the Kalobeyei Settlement in North Western Kenya. Led by the Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) unit, the intervention aims to help RLOs become legally registered. As an ICLA project coordinator explained,

> CRRF talks about having communities at the heart of interventions, including community-led projects through CBOs towards building refugees' self-reliance. This intervention is heavily based on the CRRF because as an operation we talked a lot about how we can involve more refugee-led social associations, to increase their access to funding and to help support the work we want to achieve in a sustainable manner.

The impact that the legal registration of RLOs could have on refugee beneficiaries is significant; one survey of refugees in Uganda and Kenya on their primary source of social protection found that in an emergency over 90% would first turn to community-level support rather than larger NGOs or international organisations.[56]

The ICLA project works to influence existing government policy regarding refugee self-help groups and RLOs owing to a lack of government guidance on registering them in Kenya. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, several high-level joint meetings took place on the topic and there was a government commitment to quickly change the policy. Such a change would significantly enhance the ability of refugees to organise and assist each other, including through legally accepting donations to fund their work.

Due to the looming COVID-19 crisis, the Government Directorate tasked with group registration shifted its attention to competing social protection activities, leading the discussions on group registration to slow down. 'Now I hope we can slowly take up the conversation again,' the project coordinator shared, 'I had a call with the Social Development Office sometime last week and they informed me that they are still pursuing the policy change, but it has just taken longer than anticipated.'

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56 Betts, A.; Easton-Calabria, E.; & Pincock, K. (2018) The Global Governed? Refugees as providers of protection and assistance. RSC Research in Brief. Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. 'Available at: https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/research-in-brief-refugees-as-providers-of-protection-and-assistance'

Meanwhile, refugees seeking to register organisations are still waiting to do so in order to legally implement activities – and the needs of refugees themselves continue to increase. In this way, COVID-19 and the associated lockdown has affected not only a CRRF-related intervention with longer-term community development aims but also refugees who could have benefitted from greater assistance provided by fellow refugees.

Many informants echoed the sentiment that the short-term needs created by the pandemic must not obscure the long-term needs of development and solutions, themselves so often interlinking. There was an urge by many for systems strengthening, and for the GCR to be used to promote this goal. As one international humanitarian agency informant proclaimed,

> I would have liked this [the pandemic] to be a translation of the humanitarian-development nexus way of bridging things. If we receive money for COVID-19 let's not invest in water trucks but systems…we have the tools, so what are we waiting for? I would like us to do things differently, to not use the excuse of 'this is an emergency'. Humanitarianism and development works very differently now than it did 20 years ago. I would like to be able to say: we used COVID-19 as a way of making sure that refugees were included into systems, that they became better integrated, that we improved the systems they entered into.

The Longer-term viability of Compact

When we examine the longer-term viability of the Compact in the face of COVID-19, implementation and collaboration emerge as key areas of need, which – if enacted on – could also heighten the potential of the GCR to contribute to addressing COVID-19 and related challenges. The following sections highlight needs, challenges, and opportunities to promote the longer-term viability of the GCR.

The ongoing need for implementation
It is clear that the longer-term viability of the GCR rests in its implementation. For many informants the GCR was described as a 'starting point', both in language and as a document, with the real weight of it to be seen. As one INGO informant based in Geneva explained,

> The GCR has provided a baseline for advocacy so it is super important. Although it's non-binding it is a gold standard. It offers agreed language, agreed ways to respond to refugees. You can therefore always argue this is how countries should respond, so you use it as much as you want, including at country-level. At the same time how much it will be implemented depends on countries, on their openness to engaging and letting in NGOs, and creating road maps for concrete action, as well as how much UNHCR pushes it in-country.

Concomitantly this includes the ability for actors to 'translate' it from the global arena of policy to the 'local level of practice. This would always have been the case, but the importance grows starker in the face of competing health and economic crises, altered work and travel habits, delayed meetings and legislation, and the sheer volume of other commitments that engaged actors have always had to balance. Even before the pandemic, the same informant stated, engaging with it at the national and local level was difficult: 'For our country offices it's been hard to find an entry point to advocate because often there is no national process set up. It is hard to use the GCR if there is no forum for it.'

The value of regular key stakeholder engagement
As mentioned above, some of the potential for the longer-term viability of the Compact appears to come not through the content of the GCR so much as the process of creating it. The number of discussions, consultations, drafts, and overall engagement between a wide array of actors offered a mean for united advocacy and engagement. Many informants iterated the need for similar – though less time-intensive – follow-up to continue momentum for actively employing the GCR in both rhetoric and practice. A commitment to maintaining the GRF co-sponsorship groups was one suggestion, as was making better regional use of the Support Platforms. Several NGO informants mentioned the weekly UNHCR-NGO weekly meetings on preparedness and response to COVID-19 as positive examples of regular, inclusive engagement, and a NGO statement compiled by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) gratefully acknowledged the 'open dialogue' these meetings fostered.[57]

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57 ICVA (2020) NGO Statement: virtual ExCom briefing on UNHCR's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 3 June. Available at: https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/NGO%20Statement-COVID-ExCom-briefing-03062020-FINAL.pdf

Gatherings held in person as far as safe and feasible was also mentioned as important. As one NGO informant reflected, the goodwill and recognition that accompanies the implementation of the GCR is just as important as the mechanism itself. The value of international events that allow for both 'backslapping' as well as opportunities for host country governments to discuss other issues besides refugees, such as terrorism or infrastructural investment by the World Bank, was emphasised. Continuing these opportunities was seen as an important way to maintain the relevance of the GCR for host countries in particular, alongside the need to follow up with funding for internal processes and mechanisms to recognise the ideals of the Compact.

A lack of funding and investment from Western countries and donors
Yet crucial within all of these discussions is the issue of funding. The World Bank forecasts a 5.2 percent contraction in global GDP in 2020,[58] and all resources for humanitarian assistance, including official development assistance (ODA) are expected to fall.[59] There are real fears from INGOs and NGOs, as well as broader secretariats and platforms, about a lack of funding and investment from Western countries and donors. It is feared that this will undermine core tenets of the Compact and lead to main refugee-hosting becoming more restrictive. Many say this worry was already present prior to the start of the pandemic and has only grown since it began. One NGO informant stated,

> Host countries need funding for the nitty-gritty of putting people in line ministries to help them develop local level registrations to help people leave camps and go to schools. Host countries need funding to let stretched ministries of the interior provide ID documents to let refugees move freely. And now they need funding for health ministries to do COVID-19 testing. Currently in Nairobi tests are 100 USD per person – these means that refugees won't be tested! But if Western states and donors can actually support ways for the Compact to be implemented, it could work.

The issue with funding goes beyond the reduced amount of it to how it is being spent. Several informants expressed worry that large-scale funding pledged at the GRF is being channeled to address COVID-19 with no other funding expected to fill the shortfall for the projects initially planned. This presents both short-term and longer-term risks to protection.

The long-term impact of funding shortfalls on the humanitarian system
Many humanitarian actors project a reconfiguration of the humanitarian system due to COVID-19 and ensuing budget cuts to NGOs, the UN system, and multilateral organisations alike. There is an expected consolidation of NGOs as well as the closing of some smaller ones. Even some established INGOs are struggling; one well-known and longstanding organisation is expected to have a 40% budget cut this coming year. Positions in various organisations are already being lost in Geneva as budget offices reexamine the need for staff in expensive, key locations when the vast majority of meetings and large events are expected to remain virtual for at least the near future. All of this points towards an inward focus of organisations as they ascertain how best to not only maintain programming but sometimes their own jobs. As one INGO informant in East Africa stated,

> We face an extraordinary point – both as industry and as a region – of the potential of seeing the development goals of the last couple of decades being erased and undermined by economic impacts. The humanitarian industry is going to find itself in real trouble next year when billions are used to prop up the West…that money will come from somewhere. I doubt we will see overseas development and aid budgets protected in the ways that these regions desperately need them to be.

Some informants suggested that one long-term effect of these budget reductions might be a changing conceptualization of NGOs from that of 'implementers' to 'advisors' or 'consultants'. One UNHCR informant hoped that the temporary measures on increased funding flexibility put in place for implementing partners would not only continue in the long term but offer lessons for more improved partnerships in the future. Others stressed the importance of integrating refugees and other forcibly displaced peoples into host countries' national social protection systems as it becomes clearer that the humanitarian sector may not have the ability to continue the scale of programming it once had.

58 World Bank (2020) Chapter 1: Global Outlook – Pandemic, Recession: The Global Economy in Crisis. Global Economic Prospects. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. P3.
59 Development Initiatives (DI) (2020) Global Humanitarian Assistance Report – Chapter 4. Bristol: DI. Available at: https://devinit.org/resources/global-humanitari-an-assistance-report-2020/crisis-financing-covid-19-pandemic-response/#downloads

Would such changes make the GCR more or less relevant? It seems reasonable to expect that some areas of the GCR – inclusion in national systems including access to healthcare and education, as well as the regularization of documents, the linking of humanitarian safety nets to national social protection systems, and the whole-of-society approach, for example – may advance. At the same time, other key areas such as addressing GBV and strengthening child protection may suffer without the investment of more trained national and refugee staff in these areas.

Increased localisation? Furthering the whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches
A topic repeatedly brought up by informants, and by now reinforced through a plethora of research articles and think pieces,[60] is how COVID-19 will affect the localisation of the humanitarian and development sector, and in this way affect principles and approaches advocated for in the GCR, notably the whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches. Opinions diverge.

Some feel that the pandemic has presented an opportunity to further localisation that is already occurring out of necessity. Informants mentioned a shift to remote programming as well as in some cases significant gaps in communication without the presence of local workers or organisations. Many seemed hopeful about an ongoing shift in both rhetoric and practice regarding the presence of refugee-led organisations and broader refugee agency and participation. The combination of the attention this received at the GRF as well as recent research and publicity on refugee-led organisations' responses to COVID-19 is seen as a powerful foundation for ongoing change.

In part as a result of the pandemic, multiple INGO and NGO informants described a heightened need for refugee inclusion and leadership within organisations, and a need to reflect on their own processes and practices. Informants describe this as occurring due to a widespread recognition of the limits of humanitarian capacities as COVID-19 has disrupted programme implementation as well as supply chains. One informant explained,

> I feel as though the pandemic has brought refugee participation and agency on as a conversation that must and is being had. No one can not listen now. The talk is very real, very visceral – and now very much about lives at stake. There are serious consequences for everyone, which means less opportunity for complacency. And that is always important, it seems to me.

Others, however, are more pessimistic. One NGO informant stated,

> There is a very broad idea that the pandemic is going to increase localisation within UNHCR, that it will receive an obligatory boost because of the fact that if we can't move and can't reach people, what will happen? Yet every time in meetings with UNHCR, they say localisation is being boosted. But when we ask, "How much funding is being redirected? How many new partnership agreements reached with local actors?" we receive no response. So I'm not too sure that localisation will emerge in the way we envision – isn't the risk that sub-contracting happens even more than was happening before?

This quote illustrates a fear that only funds rather than a larger transfer of responsibility and ownership will also take place. Other informants further worried about disproportionate levels of risk being placed on refugees and local actors in ways that reinforce rather than address problematic power dynamics.

Similar to other discussions on the implementation of the GCR, there was an overall consensus that while COVID-19 has created an opportunity borne out of necessity for positive change, the effects and outcomes remain to be seen. It is clear that this rhetoric of localisation, too, must be matched in practice. As one informant stated, 'The focus on refugee-led organisations brought up by the GRF and now COVID-19 is a window that will soon close.'

60 See for example: Betts, A.; Easton-Calabria, E.; Pincock, K. (2020) The Localisation of Humanitarian Assistance as a Response to COVID-19. April 21. Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, 'COVID-19 Watch' Series. Available at: https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/publication/localisation-humanitarian-assistance-re-sponse-covid-19; ICVA (2020) Reinforce, Reinforce, Reinforce: Localization in the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response. 30 March. Available at: https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/ICVA_Localization_COVID19.pdf; ODI (2020) 'All eyes are on local actors': Covid-19 and local humanitarian action. Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Available at: https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/covid-19_localisation_brie-fing_note_web.pdf

The future of forced displacement

When examining the longer-term viability of the GCR, it is crucial to take into account the ongoing nature of forced displacement. Increasing climate change-induced displacement in countries around the globe, and ongoing conflicts and crises in multiple regions, will create both internal and cross-border displacement. 'COVID-19-related displacement' was also discussed by several NGO informants; one example provided was the repatriation of Venezuelan displaced people who left Colombia in the wake of lockdowns, destroyed informal livelihood opportunities, forced evictions, and food shortages. As one INGO working directly with Venezuelans in Colombia explained,

> We estimate that there has been a wave of 80,000 people who have returned within 6 weeks, and there might be another wave later on. People return because they don't have food or a place to stay – it is not really voluntary. They also don't have information about the situation in Venezuela, which is not actually better than here. Yet local politicians are advocating return with xenophobic language. Those messages together have created a climate where vulnerable people are returning because of an increasingly precarious situation here. Yet we expect that within the next five months people who go back to Venezuela will then return to Colombia both because of health reasons and the general humanitarian situation there. This will create much more pressure on the response and on Colombia itself.

The ability for people to move safely, particularly when seeking asylum, is needed. This suggests a tricky balance between closing borders for safety and opening them for the very same reason that must continue to be advocated for by the UN, NGOs, and other actors.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Today we live in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and regularly confront the practical and logistical challenges of it both in refugee assistance and in everyday life. Compounding this is the climate crisis and rising numbers of forcibly displaced people, along with alarming levels of xenophobia, refoulement, and ongoing border restrictions. In light of these converging pressures, it is evident that the pandemic is not the only but instead the first of many tests for the GCR. There are many lessons to learn from this test, as well as much in the Compact that will be relevant for future crises. Perhaps above all, the COVID-19 pandemic and its many secondary impacts demonstrate that refugees, and indeed all of us, need more – not less – international cooperation and responsibility-sharing today. For this reason and many more, the GCR remains a tool to make use of.

ANNEX 1

Research Approach and Interview Tools

- **Content analysis of the GCR** to understand which aspects provide guidance in relation to COVID-19, and which themes and issues cited in the Compact could be featured in this research. Examples include (non-exhaustively):
  - GCR Objectives: (i) ease pressures on host countries; (ii) enhance refugee self-reliance; (iii) expand access to third country solutions; and (iv) support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity
  - Compact's basis of 'predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing' (para 3)
  - Implementation of CRRF (para 10)
  - Programme of Action approach, e.g. participatory; age, gender, and diversity (AGD) (para 13) 'complementary action at the global and region- or country-specific levels' (para 15)
  - Support platforms (Section 2.2)
  - Involvement of refugees and host community members (para 34)
  - Areas of particular support: Education; Jobs and livelihoods; Health; Women and girls; Children, adolescents and youth; Food security and nutrition; and others (paras 68-84)
  - Funding and effective and efficient use of resources (Section 3.1)
  - Resettlement and complementary pathways to third countries (Sections 3.2 and 3.3)
  - Local integration (Section 3.4)

- **Analysis of GRF pledge database** to identify interview informants and projects to research to ensure geographical breadth and topical variety;

- **Scoping study to gain a 'global picture'** of the extent to which the GCR is used in public advocacy through public and internal documents, articles, and stakeholder interviews;
  - Scoping studies are a type of intensive literature review akin to a rapid evidence review, which seeks to identify and map existing knowledge on a given topic. This research method is useful when an undefined amount of evidence exists, and is an iterative process that avoids duplication and builds on resources as they are identified. There are generally 5 stages of a scoping study:
    - Stage 1: Identifying the research questions [questions already identified in ToR]
    - Stage 2: Identifying relevant studies through electronic databases, reference lists of papers found, hand-searching of key journals or websites:
      - See Table 2. below for a selected list of websites of humanitarian and development agencies/ organisations, and research and evidence databases to search, as well as networks and list serves to circulate a call for information.
    - Stage 3: Study selection
      - Interview informants are identified
      - Case studies are selected to analyze in more depth
    - Stage 4: Charting the data
      - Data from desk-based research and interviews are synthesized and interpreted by charting and sorting material according to the research questions, key issues, and themes such as how is GCR being used, the impacts of COVID-19, whether impacts are positive or negative (and for whom), etc.
    - Stage 5: Collating, summarizing and reporting the results
      - Further analysis, including synthesizing interview findings
      - Report writing (draft and final)
    - Parallel 'consultation exercise' to inform and validate findings
      - Ongoing feedback from DRC
      - Roundtable with UNHCR, DRC, and other experts
      - Ongoing discussions with academics and practitioners engaged in this work

Table 2. Overview of Data Sources: Databases and websites to review (non-exhaustive)

Research and Resources Databases	Humanitarian & Development INGOs/NGO/Agency websites	Networks & List serves to circulate public call for information
ALNAP	CARE	CARFM (Canadian Association for Refugee & Forced Migration Studies)
Campbell Collaboration Library	Catholic Relief Services	Critical Refugee Studies Collective
EPPI-Centre	Danish Refugee Council	Feinstein Centre, Tufts University
Evidence Aid	IRC	GAIN (UNHCR Global Academic International Network)
Forced Migration Review	Norwegian Refugee Council	IASFM (International Association for the Study of Forced Migration)
Gender-based Violence Area of Responsibility	Oxfam	Oxford Migration Studies Society
IDEAS	Save The Children	Oxford Refugee Studies Centre
Overseas Development Institute	UNDP	Refugee Network Whatsapp Group (East Africa)
Refugee research centres [61]	UNHCR	Refugee Research Network Research Digest (RRN)
RefWorld	World Bank	Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative Community of Practice (RSRI)
ReliefWeb	World Vision	UCLA Center for the Study of International Migration

- **Key stakeholder interviews** to understand the use of the GCR and the impact of the crisis on it
  - 55 qualitative semi-structured key stakeholder interviews (30-60 minutes) identified through snowballing (wherein existing contacts and informants share relevant contacts to interview), desk-based research, public call for information circulated on research and practice list serves
  - Please see Table 1 in Section III. Overview of Research for overview of actors interviewed

- **Participant observation of relevant remote meetings and webinars** to gain information, identify potential contacts, and analyze discourse and actions related to the GCR and COVID-19
  - **Meetings and webinars included**:
    - 'GRF Virtual Informal Briefing and Follow-Up', convened by UNHCR (attended June 11, 2020)
    - 'Creating Inclusive Cities' [focus on GCR urban aims], convened by UNHCR and Intercultural Cities (attended June 18, 2020)
    - 'Migrant and Refugee Sensitive COVID-19 Response and Recovery', Speaker: Vittoria Zanuso, Executive Director of the Mayors Migration Council, convened by the Resilient Cities Network (video recording available online)

- **5-6 'Deep dive' case studies** of relevant country responses (at state, UN, NGO, and local levels) identified through and comprised of information from the review and key stakeholder interviews. Note: while this was planned and interviews centred on the countries below, in practice the limited duration of the project meant that in-depth country specific case studies were not possible.
  - **East Africa CRRF countries:** Uganda; Kenya
  - **Europe:** Germany
  - **Middle East:** Jordan, Lebanon
  - **Central and South America:** Brazil, Colombia
  - **South/Southeast Asia:** Bangladesh, Malaysia (GRF pledge recipient countries)

- **Content analysis of findings**, with a focus on the impact of the crisis on the GCR, and lessons, good practices, and examples regarding the applicability of the Compact and advocacy in times of crisis.

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61 These include: Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford: www.rsc.ox.ac.uk; Centre for Refugee Studies, York University: http://crs.yorku.ca/; Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging, University of East London: www.uel.ac.uk/cmrb; Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo: www.aucegypt.edu/gapp/cmrs; Centre for Refugee Research, University of New South Wales: www.crr.unsw.edu.au/.

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