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## DEFINITION – Refugee-led Organization (RLO)

***“An organization or group in which persons with direct lived experience of forced displacement play a primary leadership role and whose stated objectives and activities are focused on responding to the needs of refugees and/or related communities.”***

- 1. ORGANIZATION OR GROUP:** refers to individuals that work together through collective action as either formal or informal, registered or unregistered, or virtual or physical entities, initiatives or networks.
- 2. PERSONS WITH A DIRECT LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT:** includes asylum-seekers, refugees and former refugees.

**Asylum-seeker:** A general term for any person who is seeking international protection. In some countries, it is used as a legal term referring to a person who has applied for refugee status or a complementary international protection status and has not yet received a final decision on their claim. It can also refer to a person who has not yet submitted an application but intends to do so, or may be in need of international protection.

**Refugees:** Any person who meets the eligibility criteria under an applicable refugee definition, as provided for in international or [regional refugee instruments](#), under UNHCR’s [mandate](#), or in national legislation. Under international law and UNHCR’s mandate, refugees are persons outside their countries of origin who are in need of [international protection](#) because of feared persecution, or a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or freedom in their [country of origin](#) as a result of [persecution](#), [armed conflict](#), violence or serious public disorder.

- 3. PRIMARY LEADERSHIP:** refugees play a primary leadership role in an organization when they have the sustained ability to make a substantive contribution to the organization’s decision-making. Where national policies allow, refugees hold the majority of the senior leadership roles, governing boards, and as senior executive management. However, refugees may not be able to play these formal roles if national policies do not allow, but still be substantively involved in all decisions of the organization in a manner that is accessible, informed, safe, and free.
- 4. RESPONDING TO:** refers to the motivation of RLO action being needs and priorities expressed by refugees and related communities, reflecting the dynamic relationship between RLOs and the communities they serve.
- 5. NEEDS OF:** RLOs engage in advocacy, protection, assistance, and service provision to advance rights-based and people-centred responses for persons who are forcibly displaced and related communities.
- 6. RELATED COMMUNITIES:** refers to communities that are proximate to persons who are forcibly displaced, including host communities, and communities whose well-being is connected to the well-being of persons who are forcibly displaced.