Background Note
2025 UNHCR Regional Consultations with NGOs in Asia and the Pacific
17-18 September 2025

Background

The UNHCR Regional Consultations with NGOs are held every two years and serve to bring strategic discussions closer to operational realities. They alternate with UNHCR Global Consultations with NGOs. Since 2021, UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and NGOs have co-organized these consultations with civil society partners to **foster a meaningful exchange of ideas**, **define regional priorities**, and **inform collaborative strategies** to develop joint regional-specific discussions and actionable recommendations.

The 2025 Regional Consultations with NGOs in Asia and the Pacific will be co-convened by **UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific**, **Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)**, and **the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)** from 17-18 September 2025 (format TBC). The consultations build on past engagements, in line with global commitments to enhance meaningful NGOs participation, and in response to displacement, including in refugee and statelessness contexts.

In the lead-up to the consultation, a selected group of diverse key civil society organizations (CSOs) will form an **Advisory Group** to co-design the agenda, ensure relevance to field realities, and guide follow-up. Their participation reflects a broader shift from consultation to co-leadership, grounded in the Principles of Partnership, Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach and the localization agenda.

The consultation comes at a time of considerable change across the humanitarian sector, from funding pressures and political shifts to growing demands for localization, transparency and accountability. In this regard, the consultation seeks to create a space for open and pragmatic dialogue, and to explore how collaboration can be strengthened through more equitable and inclusive partnerships.

The recommendations will be shared with UN Member States attending the 76th Plenary Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee (ExCOM) 6-10 October 2025. The outcomes will help shape regional contributions to global policy events including the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review on 15-17 December 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Regional Context

Across Asia and the Pacific, civil society plays an increasingly critical role in addressing forced displacement, often in highly localized, politically sensitive, and resource-constrained environments. The consultation takes place against a backdrop of several defining trends:

- **Increased complexity in mixed movements**, with ongoing displacement from Myanmar, Afghanistan, and climate-affected areas in the Pacific and South Asia, often involving people with diverse profiles and limited access to formal protection channels.
- **Shrinking asylum space**, including growing use of security frameworks over protection standards, detention practices, and border externalization policies that limit humanitarian access.

- **Chronic and severe underfunding**, particularly for national NGOs and forcibly displaced and stateless person-led initiatives, many of which are under-supported despite playing essential roles in service delivery, advocacy, and community engagement.
- **Rising momentum for localization**, with strong calls across the region to shift from consultation to co-leadership, backed by more equitable access to funding, decision-making, and coordination platforms.
- Need for shared understanding of how **UNHCR's priorities are adapting,** in light of regional and global shifts, with space for civil society to reflect on where alignment and collaboration can be strengthened.

Objectives

The 2025 Regional Consultations with NGOs aims to:

- **Facilitate structured dialogue** between UNHCR and a diverse range of civil society actors on shared protection and solutions challenges;
- **Highlight field realities** related to mixed movements and displacement in constrained legal, political and operational contexts;
- **Strengthen commitment to localization**, by unpacking how local leadership and national partnerships can be better supported in practice;
- **Identify focused set of actionable and jointly define priorities** that can guide UNHCR-CSOs engagement workplan and follow-up throughout 2025–2026 (SMART recommendations)
- **Foster mutual understanding of UNHCR's evolving priorities** and strengthen space for further collaboration.

Role of Advisory Group

To support the co-design and delivery of the consultation, co-organizers (UNHCR, APPRN and ICVA) will select a **diverse Advisory Group composed of key civil society organizations from across the region** based on the expression of interest in the survey and other consideration in relation to thematic and geographic representation, scope of work and gender . By ensuring co-leadership, shared ownership and inclusive representation throughout the process, thishis group will undertake the following actions in support of the consultation:

- Provide timely input on agenda development and session design;
- Engage in preparation meeting and activities;
- Ensure that the process reflects diverse operational realities and priorities, including the perspectives of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, as well as other local civil society organizations (e.g., host-community-led groups), where relevant.;
- Contribute to outreach and inclusion of underrepresented voices;
- Support follow-up and dissemination of outcomes post-consultation.

The meeting with Advisory Group would be held virtually.

Expected Outcomes

- Shared understanding of the roles, constraints, and opportunities facing civil society in responding to protection needs in mixed movements;
- Shared reflections on how durable solutions can be advanced in restrictive or informal contexts;
- Concrete ideas to reinforce leadership by forcibly displaced and stateless people, national organizations and partnerships, and to enable equitable engagement in coordination , funding mechanisms, capacity-sharing and external relations efforts;
- A short summary of actionable and jointly identified 2025–2026 priorities, including possible follow-up actions;
- Stronger clarity among civil society actors on UNHCR's evolving focus areas, and a more informed basis for engagement, coordination, and joint planning in 2025–2026.

Participation

The main event of the UNHCR Regional Consultations with NGOs **will take place on 17–18 September 2025** (format TBC). This consultation is part of a broader process aimed at strengthening collaboration between UNHCR and civil society across the region.

Participants will include a diverse range of civil society actors from across the region such as international and national NGOs, NGO networks and coalitions, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs). Particular efforts will be made to ensure the meaningful participation of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons including Refugee-led organizations (RLOs), as well as women-led, youth-led, disability-led, and SOGIESC- diverse organizations. The consultation also aims to engage with identity-based groups and networks, including those representing older persons, Indigenous peoples, ethnic minority groups, and other marginalized constituencies — as well as UNHCR country operations.

Organization and Planning

The organization of the consultation will be grounded in the Principles of Partnership, which are **equality, transparency, results-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity.** To help ground the discussion in current realities, **pre-consultation inputs will be gathered through a targeted survey via this survey CSOs Input Survey: Shaping the 2025 UNHCR Regional NGO Consultation – Asia and the Pacific**, with the aim of developing the regional theme and shaping sessions around the priorities, gaps, and suggestions raised directly by civil society organizations.

For more information, please reach out to civilsociety.ap@unhcr.org

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