Capacity-sharing with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons

A Practical Tipsheet

Developed by the Advisory Board to the UNHCR Task Team on engagement with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons

This step-by-step guide provides recommendations for personnel of humanitarian actors (including international organizations, UN agencies, NGOs, donors and governments) to effectively engage with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons to facilitate capacity-sharing. Such capacity-sharing efforts benefit all actors, improving humanitarian assistance, e.g. through stronger contextual analysis, innovative solutions, trust with communities and increased sustainability.

Capacity-sharing is a two-way, collaborative process that emphasizes mutual learning, knowledge exchange, and co-creation of solutions between local/national and international actors. It recognizes and respects the knowledge, capabilities, and strengths of local/national actors, such as organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and leverages the collective strengths of all stakeholders to achieve shared goals and increases international actors' programs adaptation to align with and effectively respond to local contexts.

What are common capacity-strengthening needs of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons?

According to recent research,[1] the most common capacity-strengthening needs for organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons include the following:[2]

1. **Resource mobilization and donor relations:** Advocacy and relationship building and maintenance with funders; Grant proposal writing and managing application processes; Resource management, advanced fundraising techniques and development of sustainability plans to secure and sustain funding
2. **Project management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** Refugee leadership and strategic planning; Simple and practical project management tools/ templates; Setting clear goals and improve project planning, execution and reporting; Design responses that meet standards of PSEA, inclusion etc.; Effective M&E; accountability practices
3. **Financial management and legal frameworks:** Simple and practical financial management tools and templates (including digital systems); Budgeting, expense tracking and financial reporting according to the funding entity
4. **Communication, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement:** Advocacy with national and local governments and regional mechanisms; How to communicate about refugee, IDP and stateless people' matters, advanced communication strategies and the effective use of diverse communication channels; Outreach and engagement of new stakeholders and network/coalition building

What areas of expertise can organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons train other actors on?

It is key to plan for mutual learning opportunities, not only one-way training. As such, humanitarian actors may benefit from organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons' expertise and experience in the following areas:[3]

1. **Technical areas** on which the organization led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons has a specific expertise
2. **Innovation** and technology-driven solutions for service delivery and outreach
3. **Advocacy and policy** recommendations driven by lived experiences coupled with thematic expertise and grassroots perspectives
4. Appropriate **community engagement** strategies and accountability mechanisms that communities trust
5. Understanding of local customs and **cultural sensitivities,** as well as conflict and peacebuilding sensitivities
6. Effective, systematic, and inclusive outreach and **communication**
7. Navigating **informal/local governance systems** (e.g. camp committees, diaspora networks)
8. Contextual, culturally-sensitive, and effective strategies to **address discrimination and foster safe, inclusive spaces** and responses for all. This is particularly relevant for organizations with specific expertise in working with marginalized groups such as women, persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ individuals.

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[1] *Survey results collected by Refugee-Led Innovation Fund, APNOR, Moving Minds Alliance. The UNHCR 2023 Partnership Survey and UNHCR Hungary also collected feedback from national and local partners that are not led by displaced and stateless persons.*

[2] *This list is not exhaustive, as needs may differ based on local and organizational context.*

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Step-by-step Guidance

The steps and actions outlined in this guidance are grounded in the assumption that a community engagement strategy is in place that includes inclusive mapping of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, sustained and equitable partnership frameworks, and mechanisms to ensure meaningful participation. Without this broader foundation, capacity sharing risks becoming tokenistic or disconnected from the realities and leadership potential within refugee communities. Consult the How-to Guide for UNHCR Operations on Working with Organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons for more recommendations.

Capacity-Sharing Plan Development

Step 1: Conduct joint capacity-needs assessment

- **Think about how "capacity" is defined.** Oftentimes, there is a disconnect between how capacity is defined by humanitarian actors and the specific capacities needed in a given context.
- **Identify existing capacities and strengths** (organizational and technical skills) that can be built on.
- **Jointly identify gaps** and learning needs (organizational and technical skills), ensure a demand-driven approach, and do not decide on an organization's behalf or impose training programmes unless it is agreed otherwise as a funding requirement.
- **Reflect on shared priorities** that are context-specific and focus on areas with the greatest impact.
- **Use participatory methods** and be inclusive when assessing capacity-needs.
    - Consider focus group discussions, surveys, or workshops with staff and community members.
    - If you choose to engage facilitators, engage those that communities trust and choose to be their representative.
    - Ensure the capacity-needs of organizations representing diverse groups as a fundamental responsibility, not an optional consideration.
    - Select venues that are safe for engagement, ensuring anonymity if needed.
    - Minimize power imbalances by facilitating Refugee experts' presence in a safe decision making environment and actively listen to participants without judgment or minimization.
    - Ensure the safety and privacy of community members are central and protected.
- **Use the capacity-needs assessment as an opportunity** for organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons to understand your organization's processes and for your staff to gain deeper insights into local needs and ways of working.

Step 2: Map training offers and identify capacity-sharing stakeholders

- **Map and promote existing training offers** (at all levels, local, national, regional and international, and including online) and identify suitable opportunities or potential gaps.
- **Identify expertise and training offers from organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons** and invite their leaders with expertise in a certain field as experts to (joint) training programmes.
- **Co-design the training programmes with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons** and ensure that the content is adapted to the context
- **Coordinate with national or international partners** to avoid duplication or gaps in training offers.

Step 3: Co-design the capacity-sharing plan

- **Co-design a step-by-step capacity-sharing plan** with jointly defined capacity-sharing objectives, timelines, roles and responsibilities. Where appropriate, develop multi-year plans.
- **Allocate financial and technical resources** to enable the implementation of the plan (e.g. a certain percentage of every grant could be earmarked for capacity-strengthening for organization in the area they choose).
- **Go beyond one-off capacity-strengthening events** (e.g. workshops), where appropriate. Consider (two-way) twinning, coaching, shadowing, training of trainers and peer-to-peer support. Capacity-sharing is further strengthened when organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people are directly involved in all stages of programming — from joint needs assessments to planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework** to measure progress of the plan and review the plan regularly.
- **Manage expectations** by ensuring transparency around organizational priorities, challenges and limitations. i.e. the capacity-sharing plan should align with organizational priorities of both entities.

Tools and methods to consider:

- Joint learning plans: Co-created roadmap of learning goals and shared responsibilities
- Twinning or buddy system: Pair individuals across organizations for mentorship and technical exchange
- Co-led training sessions: organizations led by displaced and stateless people co-design and co-facilitate training
- Flexible funding: Support organizations led by displaced and stateless people to define their own learning priorities
- Reflection spaces: Mutual learning from lived experience and knowledge of context

Step 4: Collaborate in the implementation of the capacity-sharing plan

- **Ensure that learning opportunities are accessible to organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons** by providing financial or logistical support, e.g. in-person training sessions, internet connection, translation services and laptops.
- **Foster collaboration** through joint workshops, knowledge-sharing, and exchanges between organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons and your staff. (i.e. match mentors from programme management and financial units to support refugee leaders who manage grants).
- **Provide fair compensation for training delivery by organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons,** including preparation time and session delivery. This acknowledges the value of their expertise and supports their operational sustainability.
- **Acknowledge financial constraints** of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons who may operate with limited or no funding, which can impact their availability and capacity to participate. Put in place clear, fair, and transparent mechanisms for compensation to ensure equity.
- **Work as equal partners** by ensuring joint ownership of training activities and related decision-making processes.

How can you mitigate barriers to participation in capacity-sharing initiatives?

- Select appropriate time and location
- Ensure safety and security of all participants (e.g. consult youth, women or LGBTIQ+ individuals privately and respectfully about their preferences and needs)
- Guarantee inclusion for all participants through interpretation and by ensuring physical and digital accessibility
- Use flexible formats (in-person, online) to ensure wider reach
- Provide fair and transparent compensation to refugee, IDP or stateless leaders to reinforce the principle that their contributions are equally valuable as those of your staff holding paid employment.

Step 5: Undertake Monitoring & Evaluation, and promote sustainability

- **Conduct pre- and post-learning assessments** to measure the impact of the capacity-sharing initiative.
- **Organize regular check-ins with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons** to obtain their feedback. Use participatory monitoring methods to ensure accountability and transparency.
- **Review progress and evaluate impact** using the indicators defined in the capacity-sharing plan.
- **Document lessons learned** by capturing successes, challenges, and failures to strengthen future practice.
- **Adjust the capacity-sharing plan** and future activities based on lessons learned.
- **Encourage continued learning** through regular information sessions, communities of practice, online platforms or applications.
- **Promote sustainability** by supporting organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons in building long-term partnerships, accessing funding, and scaling their programs. Advocate for internal policies that enhance the inclusion of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons in decision-making processes.

Appendix 1

Training available to organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons (cost free):
Offers by UNHCR (non-exhaustive list - consult your UNHCR office at country level for more training offers)

- UNHCR Learning Platform
- Protection Advocacy Toolkit
- UNHCR Online Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp (on demand)
- Europe: RLO toolkit (will be included once available)
- MENA: UNHCR MENA Community Protection Network Capacity Development
- Indonesia: Basic Digital Skills Curriculum
- Austria: Community Online Wissens-Pool
- Italy: Learning Passport

Offers by organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons

- R-SEAT Geneva Advocacy Training for Refugees
- Asia Pacific Network of Refugees (APNOR): Skill Enhancement Program for Refugees
- RELON Malawi: RLO training

Offers by international partners

- International Institute of Humanitarian Law: online learning platform
- UNICEF Global Learning Passport
- UNITAR: free and open courses
- DisasterReady
- Agora
- KayaConnect
- ULearn
- Coursera
- Kiron platform
- Future Learn
- COHERE: Capacity Strengthening and Sharing Course
- Urban Refugees Incubation: RLO leadership
- Aditus foundation: Training Kit on Empowering Refugee-Led Community Organisations

Training available to international and national humanitarian actors:

- Asia Pacific Network of Refugees (APNOR):Training on Meaningful Refugee Participation
- Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN): e-learning platform for capacity building of service providers and SOGIESC communities
- Refugee Advocacy Lab: A guide for centering displaced people in policy advocacy