Concept Note
Regional Consultations with NGOs in Asia and the Pacific

17–18 September 2025 | 12:00–16:00 Bangkok time | Online

Bringing together diverse civil society voices to co-lead, co-create, and collectively shape practical solutions and shared commitments for protection and localization

1. Introduction

The Regional Consultations with NGOs provide a platform for dialogue between UNHCR, NGOs, and other civil society actors. Since 2021, UNHCR has co-organized these consultations to foster a meaningful exchange of ideas, define regional priorities, and inform collaborative strategies to further protection and solutions. The consultations come at a time of considerable change across the humanitarian sector, from funding pressures and political shifts, to growing demands for localization, transparency and accountability.

This year's consultation is being co-convened jointly by UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). The consultation has been shaped by a survey targeting civil society organisations (CSOs), which gathered input from 125 organizations across 26 countries, and benefits from the guidance of a CSOs Advisory Board[1] comprising 14 CSOs from across the region.

This two-day event will focus on the following overarching themes **(1) *Protection and solutions in onward movements***, and **(2) *Localization in practice*.** These themes reflect both global policy priorities and regional realities and will guide discussions towards actionable recommendations.

For more details, kindly refer to Background Note and Key findings: Pre-consultation Survey 2025 Regional Consultations with NGOs - Asia and the Pacific.

2. Objectives

1. **Facilitate** the active participation of a broad spectrum of civil society actors, including those led by refugees, stateless persons, women, and local communities.
2. **Promote** shared ownership and co-leadership by involving local and national actors in agenda setting, session design, and outcome development.
3. **Enable** consultation on regional protection and solutions priorities in the context of onward movements, shrinking asylum space, and challenges of access to protection across borders.
4. **Advance** localization in practice by highlighting equitable partnerships, recognition of local actors, and sustainable community-led responses.
5. **Foster** peer learning and practical exchange by creating structured opportunities for showcasing solutions, building skills, and reflecting on shared challenges.
6. **Ensure** concrete outcomes and accountability through agreed follow-up actions, transparent documentation, and shared responsibility for implementation.

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[1] ***The Advisory Board is comprised of the following organizations;*** *Accessibility Organization for Afghan Disabled (AOAD), Asia Pacific Network of Refugee (APNOR), Association for Protection of Refugee Women and Children (HAMI), Cisarua Refugee Shotokan Karate Club (CRSKC),Family Frontiers, IFDAA, Inspired, Jesuit Refugee Service, Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (KIBHR), Muslim Student Union, Robo Co-op, Rohingya Youth Initiative (RYI), Sisterhood, and the Society for Human Rights & Prisoners' Aid (SHARP-PAKISTAN).*

3. Overarching topics

Protection and Solutions in Onward Movements

People on the move continue to be exposed to a magnitude of protection risks, increased vulnerability, trauma and loss of life, driven by a complex interplay of conflict, violence, persecution and serious public disorders. Many face barriers such as lack of legal stay, deportations without safeguards, and reduced access to basic services. The consultation will explore these challenges through a practical 'whole-of-route' lens, focusing on comprehensive and strengthened protection and solutions approaches and responses, with the aim of shaping regional responses that are both rights-based and grounded in operational realities.

Localization

Localization[2] is key to building more effective and lasting protection responses. Yet many civil society actors, especially those led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, continue to face barriers to their full participation. This includes limited access to funding, lack of recognition, and minimal influence over planning and decision-making. The consultation will explore what enables meaningful leadership by local actors and where current practices fall short. It will also highlight practical models of shared decision-making and partnership that go beyond token involvement, positioning local organizations as central to protection efforts, policy development, and long-term solutions.

Day 1: Wednesday 17 September 2025

Opening session

The consultations will begin with an official welcome and administrative arrangements to orient participants to the platform and tools, followed by opening remarks from UNHCR and the co-convenors APRRN and ICVA. This segment will set the tone for the two days, introduce the objectives of the consultations, and highlight insights from the participant survey. Together, these elements will provide context, acknowledge the contributions of partners, and establish a shared purpose for the discussions ahead.

Introductory Briefing – Shifts in the humanitarian sector, regional forced displacement trends and key policy considerations

The consultations will continue with a UNHCR briefing on the regional context, key policy considerations, and priorities for protection and solutions in Asia and the Pacific. The session will review recent developments in the humanitarian sector, highlight emerging trends and risks, and outline how these shape responses to displacement and statelessness. It will also set out the regional protection environment and frame the priorities that will guide discussion over the two days, giving participants a shared foundation for dialogue.

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[2] Instead of enforcing a single definition, we would like to offer a shared understanding of what localization includes and provides a flexible framework to set priorities and support decision-making. ***Localization can be understood as:***

- ***An approach or process of shifting power and resources to local and national actors (LNA),*** *recognizing and reinforcing their leadership, decision-making, and capacities.*
- ***A recognition that LNAs are fundamental part*** *of the humanitarian system and therefore must take part in the development and implementation of humanitarian strategies*
- ***A commitment*** *to increase* ***fundings,*** *ensure two-way* ***capacity-sharing****, ownership and meaningful participation in* ***decision-making*** *process and more equitable collaboration and* ***partnerships*** *between LNAs and international actors*
- ***A key element of humanitarian entry and exit strategies.***
- *A* ***multiplier for impact****, autonomy, and advocacy by LNAs.*

Localization ***should not be valued primarily for its cost-effectiveness or in cases of access limitations***

*Raad more on locally led action here****: https://alnap.org/glossary/***

Protection and Solutions in Onwards Movements
Onward movements across Asia and the Pacific raise urgent protection risks and highlight the need for practical solutions. This session will open with a regional introduction into the route-based approach and plenary discussion on key challenges, before moving into breakout groups on three priorities: I) protection sensitive entry and strengthening of asylum systems, II) Addressing immediate protection and assistance needs and rights centered options, III) Solutions, with a focus on complementary pathways and community-led solutions. The plenary will close with feedback from each group and agreement on next steps to strengthen community-led protection and regional cooperation.

Day 2: Thursday 18 September 2025

Advancing Localization
This session will examine localization as a core element of protection and solutions. It will open with a briefing on UNHCR's global position and regional perspectives (Factsheet: UNHCR localization | UNHCR), followed by a panel on financing and sustainability that explores equitable funding, innovative models, and safeguarding civic space. Breakout groups will then address three priorities: meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people, capacity-sharing as mutual exchange, and reimagining partnerships for equity and accountability. A plenary debrief will consolidate insights and outline next steps for advancing localization in the region.

Global Refugee Forum (GRF) Progress Review
This session will provide a briefing on the upcoming GRF Progress Review in December 2025. This Review aims to take stock of the progress made against the objectives of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), to identify good practices as well as challenges in the implementation of pledges made as part of the GRF process. The consultation will inform the programme of the Progress Review and outline next steps to advance GCR pledge implementation efforts in the lead-up to the next GRF in 2027.

Closing Session
The final session will bring together the main insights from the two days, with the co-convenors presenting highlights from plenary and breakout sessions. This will draw out shared priorities, practical solutions, and areas of convergence to shape common recommendations. The segment will conclude by outlining key takeaways and next steps for collaboration between NGOs, UNHCR, and partners, ensuring the outcomes inform ongoing regional work on protection and solutions.

Networking

A "Community Wall" will be set up through a networking mural/padlet where participants can share contact details, practices, and reflections. This space will serve as both a live interactive tool during the consultation and a directory afterwards, helping sustain connections, highlight key insights, and promote collaboration across organizations.

Contact

For any queries please contact:

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- ICVA: Davina Said, Head of Forced Migration, davina.said@icvanetwork.org; officers@icvanetwork.org

About co-convenors

APRRN: The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), founded in 2008, is a network of 320 organisational and individual members. We undertake joint advocacy, capacity building and network strengthening towards protecting and promoting the human rights of refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless people and other vulnerable people on the move in the Asia Pacific region. (website: APRRN)

ICVA: International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), founded in 1962, is a global network of over 160 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in 160 countries, operating at global, regional, national and local levels, whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice. (website: ICVA)

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.(website: UNHCR)

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