

# Migration Challenges and Opportunities for Canada in the 21st Century

## Joint Submission to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

### Global Forced Displacement Working Group<sup>1</sup>

#### Recommendations

- **Support the Global Compact on Refugees and its implementation.** After two years of extensive dialogue and consultation between Member States and a wide range of other stakeholders, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) represents an important opportunity to address several key challenges currently facing the refugee regime. It provides a clear framework through which refugee-hosting states can be supported to adopt approaches to refugees that promote protection and solutions. It can also rebuild trust between refugee hosting states and other members of the international community, generate political will to make cooperation more predictable, and protection and solutions for refugees more reliable. Canada played a leading role in the development of the GCR, including its language on protection of refugee women and girls and the need for greater accountability. The implementation of the GCR will be good for refugees, refugee hosting states, and donor and resettlement countries, like Canada. In its implementation of the GCR, Canada should ensure refugees are involved in defining what pledges are needed. Canada should work to elevate refugee voices, including those of women and children.
- **Co-host the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019.** Canada is internationally regarded as a leader in the promotion of pragmatic and inclusive approaches to supporting refugee needs and rights. As attention shifts from the negotiation of the Global Compact on Refugees to its implementation, all Canadian political parties should support strong Canadian leadership in support of the success of the [Global Compact on Refugees](#)<sup>2</sup>, by encouraging the Government of Canada to co-host the first Global Refugee Forum. The Global Refugee Forum represents a critical opportunity to calibrate progress, share best practices, and pledge contributions towards the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, and for Canada to reinforce its reputation as a global leader in finding collective responses to shared issues of concern.
- **Support a gender-responsive, comprehensive response to a specific large-scale or protracted refugee situation in close collaboration with a chosen refugee-hosting country, UNHCR or other suitable organizations, as well as local civil society.** Canada should lead by example, including by scaling-up best practices; promoting collaborative design and implementation of various measures as part of a multi-stakeholder, truly comprehensive response; and supporting innovative approaches for working with marginalized communities, civil society organizations, local communities, and refugees themselves. This could include activating the Support Platform conceived in paragraph 23 of the Global Compact on Refugees, and consist of efforts to galvanize political commitment and advocacy; mobilize financial, material and technical assistance; facilitate coherence in humanitarian and development responses; and support

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Forced Displacement Working Group (GFDWG) is an informal coalition of organizations working together to encourage and support the Canadian government's positive influence on global policy discourses linked to forced displacement and migration. Signatories to this submission are indicated at the bottom of this document.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Part II: Global compact on refugees. [https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR\\_English.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR_English.pdf)

comprehensive policy initiatives to ease pressure on host countries, build resilience and self-reliance, and find solutions. A regional or subregional approach could be considered, as appropriate, for each context. In addition to mainstreaming gender considerations in keeping with its commitment to gender-responsive humanitarian action and longer-term development, Canada's efforts should include targeted actions to address the specific needs of women and girls at every point in the displacement cycle—from initial flight, during protracted displacement, through to durable solutions.

- **Support initiatives that address the needs of children and youth**, given that children from all affected populations including Refugee, IDP, Stateless and Host Communities experience the impact of displacement disproportionately and are vulnerable to a host of protection challenges including physical, psychological and sexual violence, discrimination, xenophobia, exploitation, early-forced marriage, child labour, trafficking, malnutrition and poor health outcomes (including psycho-social health), and limited access to essential services such as education, healthcare, nutrition, WASH and social protection. Canada should prioritize interventions that include targeted child-sensitive comprehensive responses for girls and boys, respond to the needs of their families/caregivers and households, work toward durable solutions, and strengthen national services and community child protection systems. Building on Canada's ongoing commitments to refugee education, the specific needs of displaced children must be included in Canada's implementation of its [G7 Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls and Women in Developing Countries](#)<sup>3</sup>. In implementing the [G7 Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action](#)<sup>4</sup>, Canada must strengthen prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV) against displaced children, particularly adolescent girls, and ensure accountability to displaced populations including through participation, leadership and decision-making of displaced children and adolescents. Systematic inclusion of displaced girls and boys, and adolescents, in implementing these commitments will support an inclusive, child-sensitive approach to Canada's implementation of the GCR. Canada should encourage and support states to uphold their obligations under the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)<sup>5</sup>, including in cases of family separations, missing and unaccompanied children, the prevention of child detention, and conditions that inhibit or diminish the rights and autonomy of all children within their territory. Remaining steadfast on upholding the best interests of the child at all times, and as a primary consideration where children are concerned. Canada should elevate the voices of refugee children by ensuring their rights and perspectives are integrated throughout Canada's implementation of the GCR.

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<sup>3</sup> G7 Charlevoix Declaration On Quality Education For Girls, Adolescent Girls And Women In Developing Countries (2018).  
<https://g7.gc.ca/en/official-documents/charlevoix-declaration-quality-education-girls-adolescent-girls-women-developing-countries/>

<sup>4</sup> G7 Whistler Declaration On Gender Equality And The Empowerment Of Women And Girls In Humanitarian Action (2018).  
[https://g7.gc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/THE-WHISTLER-DECLARATION-ON-GENDER-EQUALITY-AND-THE-EMPOWERMENT-OF-WOMEN-AND-GIRLS-IN-HUMANITARIAN-ACTION\\_EN.pdf](https://g7.gc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/THE-WHISTLER-DECLARATION-ON-GENDER-EQUALITY-AND-THE-EMPOWERMENT-OF-WOMEN-AND-GIRLS-IN-HUMANITARIAN-ACTION_EN.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> United Nations General Assembly. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990).  
<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>

- **Address root causes, support grassroots advocacy.** Armed conflict, climate change, development megaprojects, persecution are among the root causes that force people to flee their homes. Without addressing these root causes, forced migration will only increase. Canada can do more to address the root causes of forced migration by increasing its support for grassroots organizations working for peace, democracy and human rights, including women’s rights organizations and community based leaders, and by investing more in multi-year resilient-development diplomatic and peaceful solutions to armed conflicts. This would ensure that Canada would play a leading role in reducing the number of people who are forcibly displaced from their homes and communities.
- **Work to close protection gaps between the two Global Compacts.** Internally Displaced People (IDPs) remain on the sidelines of many of the recent initiatives to address forced displacement – most notably the efforts to establish Global Compacts for both refugees and migrants. In 2017, [40 million people](#) were estimated to be displaced within their countries as a result of conflict and violence. Seventy-six per cent of the world’s conflict IDPs are concentrated in just ten countries, including a total of [11.4 million in Iraq, Syria and Yemen](#) alone.<sup>6</sup> This year, the 20th anniversary of the [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), Canada can lead efforts to take IDPs off the sidelines and address their protection needs, in line with commitments made under the World Humanitarian Summit, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

## Key Points

### Global Forced Displacement is entirely manageable

Worldwide, over [68.5 million](#) people have been forcibly displaced. More than [44,400 people](#) are forced to flee their homes every day. Twenty-four people are displaced every minute. This represents the highest number of displaced people since World War II.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these figures, the global forced displacement challenge is entirely manageable. Refugees make up [0.3 per cent](#) of the global population, and are concentrated in a handful of frontline states.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the drivers of displacement – including war, natural disaster, climate change and famine – are interrelated and can be solved through political means.

*With adequate political will and concentrated action by the international community, a fairer and more sustainable approach to managing global forced displacement is within reach.*

### Countries of first asylum provide vast public good

Although refugee camps remain a reality for far too many displaced people, that picture is changing. Today, three-quarters of refugees do not live in camps, but side-by-side with host communities.

<sup>6</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018.

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/>

<sup>7</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2017.

<http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017/>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Facts (2017).

[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/PopFacts\\_2017-5.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/PopFacts_2017-5.pdf)

Moreover, forcible displacement is becoming more protracted, with the average duration of a refugee situation estimated at [26 years](#).<sup>9</sup>

[Eighty-eight percent](#) of today's refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income countries, many of which are already grappling with challenges related to poverty, limited infrastructure, food insecurity, natural disaster, poor governance and political instability. Without adequate support, the strain of refugee flows in such countries can threaten hard-won development gains and stability, with regional and even global consequences.

The international community has a legal and moral responsibility to support refugees and other forcibly displaced people, and the communities that host them. This means upholding their legal rights and protections, promoting access to labour markets, skills training and social security, and ensuring the availability of basic services such as health and education.

*It is critical for both social cohesion and stability that programs benefit displaced people and vulnerable host communities alike, with the view to building their self-reliance.*

### **With adequate access to services and opportunity, displaced people bring long-term benefits to the societies in which they live**

In large parts of the world, refugees continue to be subject to policies and practices that restrict their movement and impede their access to social services and livelihood opportunities. While the diverse and important roles that women and girls play in displacement contexts are increasingly recognized, women and children also face additional barriers accessing basic services, and are at increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence and child, early and forced marriage. Worldwide, [27 million](#) children are out of school due to humanitarian crises.<sup>10</sup>

While innovative financing arrangements have been introduced, many have missed the opportunity to address structural issues that refugees face in fulfilling legal rights, accessing livelihood opportunities, and obtaining education, thereby limiting their impact on the protection of refugees and displaced people. Equally, excluding refugees from taking part in solutions weakens the efforts to find complete and durable responses for refugees in host countries.

*Evidence shows that when policies promote displaced people's self-reliance and social integration through programs that maximize humanitarian and development synergies, short-term costs are outweighed by their long-term contributions to society and the economy.*

### **The international community needs to act now to implement more sustainable approaches for refugees and host communities**

Last year marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [1967 Optional Protocol to the Refugee Convention](#).<sup>11</sup> Enshrined in the protocol is a global perspective that implies the need for global responsibility for

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Contribution To The Fifteenth Coordination Meeting On International Migration (2017).

[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/15/documents/papers/14\\_UNHCR\\_nd.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/15/documents/papers/14_UNHCR_nd.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF. Education Uprooted: For every migrant, refugee and displaced child, education (2017).

[https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Education\\_Uprooted\\_DIGITAL.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Education_Uprooted_DIGITAL.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

<https://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocol-relating-status-refugees.html>

refugee protection.

The Global Compact on Refugees – due to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018 – presents a long-overdue and voluntary commitment of the world’s states to put these principles in practice. It seeks to establish a more equitable, collaborative and predictable system for meeting the immediate and long-term needs and rights of refugees and host communities alike, while promoting inclusive social and economic development.

This includes supporting the extraordinary contributions and responses of refugee-hosting communities and countries, ensuring integration of humanitarian and development responses, and implementing changes in the international assistance architecture that are adequate to address the global forced displacement challenge.

*This is an opportunity for states and their citizens to promote a stronger international culture of solidarity, to decide on new approaches on how forced displaced people will receive assistance and have their rights respected, to voice examples of successful displacement management, and to propose solutions that address the drivers of displacement and its consequences.*

### **NGOs are already leading in the on-the-ground implementation of progressive global refugee policy**

An integral part of the Global Compact on Refugees is the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The CRRF has four objectives: 1) to ease pressure on countries that welcome and host refugees, 2) to build self-reliance of refugees, 3) to expand access to resettlement in third countries and other complementary pathways, and 4) to foster conditions that enable refugees voluntarily to return to their home countries.

The CRRF also indicates a variety of areas requiring attention in responses to refugee situations. These include, for example, Working with refugees and host communities; Supporting local civil society partners; Joint planning with humanitarian and development partners; and Facilitating the participation of refugees, especially women and girls, in the peace and reconciliation process.

[Research](#) conducted in 2017 shows that many Canadian NGOs are already implementing programs that reflect the goals of the CRRF and are able to achieve results in this regard.<sup>12</sup> From early childhood education programs serving both refugee and host communities in northern Uganda, to women’s economic empowerment programming fostering employment and self-reliance among Syrian refugees in Jordan, Canadian partners and programming are already having impact while upholding best practice under the emerging international framework provided by the Global Compact on Refugees.

*Canada today has an opportunity to lead in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees by scaling up innovative programs and approaches with proven track records for improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response and improving the lives of refugees and affected host communities over the long-term.*

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<sup>12</sup> Foley, Tyler. Canadian Best Practices for Global Compacts and Beyond. International Policy Ideas Conference (2017)

**The following organizations and individuals endorse this paper:**

**Organizations:**

CARE Canada  
Canadian Council for International Cooperation  
(CCIC)  
Indigenous -Refugees Movement  
Jumpstart - Refugee talent  
Save the Children Canada  
Oxfam Canada  
Oxfam-Québec  
UNICEF Canada  
The White Helmets Canada  
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