

## APRRN-APNOR Regional Protection Forum

*Towards a 'whole of society approach' in the implementation of the Global Compacts*

7-9 September, Bangkok

### CONCEPT NOTE

The Asia-Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) and the Asia-Pacific Network of Refugees (APNOR) will co-convene a 3-day Regional Protection Forum in Bangkok, in September, in the lead-up to the inaugural Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in Geneva, in December 2019.

The Regional Protection Forum will aim to:

- Strengthen the capacity and interest of diverse actors in the region in engaging with the GRF, as well as with the longer-term implementation of both the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM); and
- Strengthen understandings of how, under a 'whole of society' approach, we can co-create sustainable enabling environments for the meaningful participation and leadership of refugees and other affected people in decisions affecting their lives, in both policy and programmatic settings, at local, national, regional and international levels. This includes strengthening infrastructure to support the independence and resiliency of existing and emerging refugee leadership region-wide.

Day 1 of the Regional Protection Forum will be designated for planning and discussion amongst APNOR members, including via virtual participation through country hubs. A small number of non-APNOR members will attend the morning session as observers and supporters. The afternoon will be dedicated to strategic planning and governance for APNOR as a network, and will be held in closed session. On Days 2 and 3, refugee leaders will be joined by additional APRRN members, and representatives of UN agencies, States and diverse other actors for discussions relating to the GRF, and the operationalisation of the GCR and GCM, with a focus upon ensuring the meaningful participation and leadership of refugees and other affected people in all related policies, programs and processes.

### ABOUT OUR NETWORKS

The **Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network** is a diverse civil society network, established in 2008, which aims to advance the rights of refugees and other people in need of protection across the Asia-Pacific region. APRRN now comprises over 400 members (mostly organisations) across 29 countries region-wide. APRRN's membership includes significant numbers of refugee-led organisations and leaders with lived refugee experience, including its current Chair.

APRRN's Theory of Change prioritises the participation of refugees and other people with lived experience of displacement, including women and young people, in order to ensure their greater say in policies, programs and solutions affecting their lives. In October 2018 APRRN co-hosted the

inaugural Asia Pacific Summit of Refugees (APSOR), on the sidelines of its 7<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights (APCRR7). At APCRR7, and in response to a recommendation of APSOR, APRRN convened a Refugee Leadership and Participation Working Group, which now has a 2-year work-plan, and is a key co-organiser, within APRRN, of this event. The other APRRN co-organising working groups are: Regional Protection; Women, Gender and Diversity; Youth; and Rohingya.

The **Asia Pacific Network of Refugees** was established in 2018, on the recommendation of APSOR, which brought together 104 representatives from refugee-led organisations, networks and communities residing in 10 host countries in the Asia Pacific region to discuss and plan for greater refugee participation in policy- and decision-making. Participation in APSOR was both in-person and virtual – through five country hubs. This was the first opportunity of its kind for refugee leaders in the Asia Pacific region to come together to share experiences, network and discuss how to strengthen refugee self-representation at all levels (locally, regionally and internationally).

APSOR was convened in response to a recommendation made at the inaugural Global Summit of Refugees (GSOR) in Geneva in June 2018, for an “inclusive international platform for refugee participation and self-representation” to be established, “made up of a representative network of refugee community organisations, initiatives and change-makers from around the world”. In working towards the establishment of a representative international refugee-led advocacy network, a proposal was developed to hold regional-level discussions. APSOR was the first of these regional-level discussions.

APNOR is a nascent, independent entity that has yet to formalize its structure and seek registration. APNOR is closely linked to the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN), which has engaged proactively on global dialogues relating to the GCR and GRF, pursuing the meaningful participation of refugees in all related policy, programmatic and procedural areas. The convenor of APNOR is also a steering committee member of GRN as well as the Chair of APRRN’s Refugee Leadership and Participation Working Group.

## **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF THE REGIONAL PROTECTION FORUM**

The APRRN-APNOR Regional Protection Forum – *Towards a ‘whole of society approach’ in the implementation of the Global Compacts* – is expected to achieve the following key outcomes:

- Diverse actors in the Asia-Pacific region, including APNOR and APRRN members, are empowered and persuaded to explore opportunities for collaborative multi-actor engagement with the GRF, as well as with the longer-term implementation of the GCR and GCM, ensuring the meaningful participation of people with lived experience in all related policies, programs and processes.
- APNOR is strengthened as an emerging refugee network through member-informed strategic planning, further development of infrastructure, and members’ exchange of expertise, country-level experience and perspectives on the requirements for the meaningful participation of refugees in all decisions affecting their lives.
- APRRN is strengthened as a network through the refinement of its policy, advocacy and practices, and deepened collaborations related to ensuring the meaningful participation and leadership of refugees and other people with lived experience of displacement in all decisions affecting their lives, in alignment with its network vision and theory of change.

An overview of the proposed approach for the Regional Protection Forum is provided below.

## CONTEXT

The GCR and the GCM were affirmed, through separate processes, in December 2018. APRRN, the Global Refugee-Led Network (GRN), and other refugee and migrant leaders and coalitions were amongst the many diverse actors who invested deeply in securing this result. The vast majority of Asia-Pacific States voted in favour of both Global Compacts.

Incisive, coordinated action is now required from the global community at large to ensure the effective implementation, follow up and review of both Global Compacts. Infrastructure and modalities for this are rapidly evolving. Preparations are well underway for the inaugural [Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF) on 17-18 December 2019, including a dedicated day of discussion held at the annual UNHCR-NGO consultations in July, with parallel regional consultations underway. Intensive discussions are also well progressed on arrangements for the new [UN Migration Network](#) and the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) to support implementation, follow up and review of the GCM.

### **A 'whole-of-society approach'**

Both the GCR and the GCM espouse a 'whole-of-society' approach. While the GCR in fact refers to a 'multi-stakeholder and partnership' approach, APRRN prefers the GCM term 'whole-of-society' as it is inherently fully inclusive.

The meaningful participation and leadership of refugees, migrants and host community members is integral for a properly functioning 'whole-of-society' approach, and must be embedded within the infrastructure developed for the Compacts' implementation, follow up and review. This applies both to operational and policy contexts in local, national, regional and global arenas.

Achieving this will require the engagement of all actors in creating enabling environments that are safe, inclusive and sustainable. This will involve upholding all gender-, age- and diversity-related commitments and the adoption of measures that will support refugee- and migrant-led organisations and networks (including those led by women, young people and others who may face significant barriers to participation) in planning and discussing policies and proposals without fear of discrimination, political interference, detention, deportation or jeopardising protection claims. Fostering conditions for enhanced self-reliance – such as access to education, work rights, decent work, labour markets and justice – will further support refugees' and migrants' agency and leadership, particularly for those in vulnerable situations.

Although welcome, precisely how a 'whole of society' approach will be applied still requires clarification, as do the opportunities and challenges arising. It will be critical, for instance, to ensure that the humanitarian character and leadership of refugee protection are maintained as diverse actors – including those without a protection or humanitarian mandate – become involved. In some instances new and emerging actors might exert significant influence in light of the resources which they may bring as efforts are stepped up to broaden the base of support. The ongoing engagement of refugees, migrants and other civil society actors in discussions regarding how the approach will be implemented is vital.

## **Complementarity**

The GCR and GCM point to interconnections between different types of displacement and certain factors to be considered to ensure well-managed responses. However they do not engage substantively with the need for complementary approaches, including in the context of mixed movements. As with a ‘whole-of-society’ approach, significant thought leadership is needed in this area.

Adoption of complementary approaches to the implementation of the Compacts is of particular concern across the Asia-Pacific since the region consistently produces and hosts large numbers of refugees (including in significant protracted situations) and also has the largest number of international migrants (predominantly South–South) of any region. Mixed movements are prevalent, and refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants often endure extremely precarious conditions and may face significant and common barriers to accessing their rights. The situation of IDPs and of stateless people remaining in-situ is also often exceptionally dire. Many Asia-Pacific States are not parties to the Refugee Convention, and there is no comprehensive regional refugee protection framework. The region is also highly affected by climate-induced disasters, environmental degradation and associated displacement.

Within this challenging context a number of promising multi-actor initiatives have emerged over recent years at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels. These include: the development of domestic legal and policy infrastructure for refugee protection and alternatives to immigration detention in countries both party and non-party to the Refugee Convention; the development of new platforms and spaces for refugee leadership and self-representation; access to education and livelihood initiatives; host community and municipal-level support for refugees and migrants; and moves by States to develop national action plans for operationalisation of commitments made under one or both Global Compacts.

## **BACKGROUND**

APRRN and many of its members and partners - including leaders of the GRN, the GCR Gender Audit, the HCR’s Global Youth Advisory Council, the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts, and others - have engaged robustly in the processes relating to the development and implementation of both Global Compacts. APRRN has designated focal points for the GCR and for the GCM, has convened two regional protection roundtables focussed on the appropriate application of the Global Compacts in Asia, made five written submissions towards the development of the GCR, contributed to numerous joint written submissions and statements across both processes, and has worked in partnership with the ACT Alliance to engage states and other actors on complementarity considerations, via roundtables and side events on the margins of key forums in Geneva, New York and Marrakech. APRRN is a co-sponsor of two GRF themes - protection capacity, and education – and is currently an observer on working groups for three other GRF themes: arrangements for burden and responsibility-sharing; solutions; and jobs and livelihoods.

In late 2018 APRRN and its members, including the Refugee Council of Australia, supported the inaugural [Asia Pacific Summit of Refugees](#), which has led to the development of APNOR and establishment of a dedicated APRRN working group on Refugee Leadership and Participation, in

support of refugees' self-representation in policy dialogues, meaningful participation in all decisions affecting their lives, and strengthened communication between members with lived experience and supporters.

## **OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL PROTECTION FORUM**

Over 7-9 September 2019, APRRN and APNOR will co-convene a Regional Protection Forum, with a focus upon supporting preparations for the GRF, including exploration of promising multi-actor practices in the region for showcasing, and encouragement of associated joint pledges, with an emphasis upon the creation of sustainable enabling environments for the meaningful participation and leadership of refugees and other affected people. We will also explore opportunities for encouraging innovation, and for broadening the base of support. And, as few initiatives are entirely positive, participants will be encouraged not to dissimulate with respect to challenges faced in the promising practice examples considered, but rather to offer up reflections on opportunities for improvement and learning, which could stimulate thinking about joint pledges. Co-organising working groups within APRRN for the event are: Refugee Leadership and Participation; Regional Protection; Women, Gender and Diversity; Youth; and Rohingya.

In keeping with two previous roundtables convened by APRRN's Regional Protection Working Group, the forum will seek to support the appropriate application of the Global Compacts in Asia, in alignment with APRRN's Vision for Regional Protection (which is being updated), with ongoing emphases upon the adoption of a whole-of-society approach and complementarity between the Compacts. Key to this will be consideration of requirements for the creation of enabling environments for the leadership and meaningful participation of refugees and migrants. The roundtable will seek to strengthen participants' understanding of the Global Compacts and their infrastructure, while identifying and catalysing opportunities for collaborative engagement to realise their objectives through sustainable and effective joint action.

The event will involve diverse actor participation, with some variability across the three days, and will be held under the Chatham House rule. Any presentations will be 'Davos style' and active engagement in discussions will be encouraged from all participants. Guiding questions, background papers and resource lists will be developed to stimulate discussion. On the advice of refugee leaders, the first two days will occur on a weekend, in order to maximise participation of people with lived experience. Following is an indicative structure:

### **Day 1 (Saturday 7 September): Asia Pacific Network of Refugees forum**

Approximately 20 APNOR members of diverse age, gender, country of origin and country of residence will convene in Bangkok, with additional members joining virtually through designated country hubs, for part or all of the proceedings. A small number of key supporters will be invited to attend as observers and presenters. The agenda for the day will likely include:

- Shared updates since APSOR (October 2018); review of progress against recommendations
- Overview and discussion of key elements of the GCR, including its gender audit and multi-actor partnership approach, and opportunities for engagement with the inaugural GRF and broader GCR implementation, including use of the Age, Gender and Diversity framing document to inform the GRF pledging process

- Discussion of initiatives demonstrating refugee leadership and meaningful participation, with multi-actor engagement and/or prospects for it; identification of diverse actor pledges which could serve to strengthen, scale-up or replicate promising practices
- Discussion of key requirements for creation of enabling environments for refugee leadership and meaningful participation in policy and operational contexts, based on a prepared background paper which will subsequently be revised to reflect participant input, and be used in advocacy with states and other actors.

### **Day 2 (Sunday 8 September): Multi-actor regional protection forum**

Approximately 70 participants, including APRRN and APNOR members, government officials, UN agency representatives, researchers, donors, ASEAN officials, and other civil society actors will convene, with some additional scope for virtual participation. The agenda for the day will include:

- Report-back from Day 1, focussed on enabling environments for refugee leadership and participation
- Regional overview, with updates on refugee and broader displacement trends and developments
- Overview and discussion of arrangements for GRF: focussed on co-sponsorship, positive practices showcasing, joint pledges, including Age, Gender and Diversity framing document; and updates on the asylum capacity support group, GCR academic network, and 3-year resettlement and complementary pathways strategy
- Panels and discussions on upholding rights in mixed movements, and on ‘broadening the base’ and innovation
- Parallel working groups on GRF themes of protection capacity, education, jobs and livelihoods, solutions, identifying promising multi-actor initiatives in the region for potential showcasing and potential associated joint pledges at GRF
- Welcome dinner.

### **Day 3 (Monday 9 September): Multi-actor roundtable on promising practices and joint pledging**

Approximately 70 participants, including APRRN and APNOR members, government officials, UN agency representatives, researchers, donors, ASEAN officials, and other civil society actors will convene. The agenda for the day will include:

- Guided discussion regarding the co-creation of enabling environments for the meaningful participation and leadership of refugees, migrants and other actors within a whole-of-society approach.
- An overview and discussion of the areas of focus, work plans and preparations underway in the 6 co-sponsorship working groups for the GRF. Consecutive parallel sessions to identify and discuss promising practices and potential joint pledges under 4 of the co-sponsorship themes: protection capacity, education, jobs and livelihoods, and solutions.
- Closing reflection on possible research priorities and partnerships; and next steps to prepare for the inaugural GRF.