



A RENEWED CALL TO

action

WORLD
REFUGEE &
MIGRATION
COUNCIL



Council Members

Lloyd Axworthy, Chair

Madeleine Albright, Honorary Chair (in memoriam)

HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal, Honorary Chair

Pamela Aall

Shaima Al Zarooni

Aya Chebbi

Sarah Cliffe

J rome Elie

Jonathan Fanton

Elizabeth Ferris, Vice President of Research

Leymah Gbowee

Fen Osler Hampson, President

Per Heggnes

Paul Heinbecker, Deputy Chair

Hina Jilani, Co-chair

Jakaya Kikwete, Co-chair

Susan Martin

Rosemary McCarney

Marwan Muasher

Devota Nuwe

Ratna Omidvar

George A. Papandreou

Nirupama Menon Rao

Allan Rock

Guven Sak

Eduardo Stein

Rita S ssmuth, Co-chair

Jessie Thomson

Cover Photo: Refugees and migrants attempting to cross at the Slovenia-Croatia border are stopped by border police in 2015. (Janossy Gergely/Shutterstock); page 4: Mikhail Palinchak; page 7: Joel Aguilar; page 13: Tolga Sezgin; page 23: Edgar Bullon.

This World Refugee & Migration Council publication provides information, analyses and recommendations as part of the Council's ongoing program of work. However, not all Council members may necessarily agree with every aspect of the report.

Copyright   2022 by the World Refugee & Migration Council.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution – Noncommercial – No Derivatives License. To view this license, visit Creative Commons. For re-use or distribution, please include this copyright notice.

Published 6 September 2022



World Refugee & Migration Council

44 Eccles Street #200
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1R 6S4
www.wrncouncil.org

The World Refugee & Migration Council is supported by a partnership with Cuso International.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
A Renewed Call to Action.....	7
A Grave Situation	8
New and Neglected Emergencies.....	8
Dangerous Backsliding on Borders and Toxic Narratives	9
COVID & Health Outcomes for Refugees and Migrants.....	10
An Unacceptable Status Quo	11
Taking the Lead: A Critical Role for Civil Society, Refugees and The World’s Major Private Foundations	11
Taking Action	13
Repurposing Frozen Assets	15
Promoting an International Anti-Corruption Court.....	16
Strengthening Regional Institutional Capacity	17
Addressing the Challenges of Host Communities.....	18
Innovative Financing.....	19
Climate Change & Forced Displacement	20
Inclusive Governance	21
Helping Victims of Torture and Major Human Rights Abuses	22
Conclusions & Recommendations.....	23
Key Recommendations.....	24



Executive Summary

Over 30 million people have been forcibly displaced within and across borders, since the World Refugee & Migration Council released ***A Call to Action: Transforming the Global Refugee System***, in 2019. Now, in 2022 that number exceeds 100 million – not including the millions of migrants forced to move by worsening economic conditions, famine, corruption, police brutality, and climate change. Simply put, the situation has gone from dire to disastrous.

In *A Call to Action*, the Council stressed that the situation the global community faced was not a refugee or displacement crisis but a political crisis – a failure of the political will and leadership needed to confront these problems. The response has been totally inadequate. Instead of capitalising on the momentum generated by the Global Compacts on Refugees, there is increasing NIMBY-ism, xenophobia, and buck-passing of responsibility by high-income countries to low- and medium-income countries in the hopes that symbolic aid packages will satisfy their international pledges.¹

Pressures on host countries are increasing, not diminishing. Opportunities for refugees to become self-reliant are evaporating as the global economy suffers the twin perils of stagflation. Refugee access to third-country solutions, including resettlement and legal pathways, is constrained. And because of continuing conflict, the prospects of refugees returning in “safety and dignity” to their countries of origin are dim. Meanwhile, a new driver of forced displacement – climate change – is already responsible for forcibly displacing 21.5 million people since 2008. **According to some estimates**, the numbers could surge to 1.2 billion by 2050—a worsening situation that requires urgent attention.

The next UN Global Refugee Forum will take place only in late 2023, but the need for real action to galvanize political will is now. The World Refugee & Migration Council is issuing ***A Renewed Call to Action*** and urging governments, civil society, and the world’s leading foundations to pick up the mantle and **reset the response** to global displacement.

The Council calls on world leaders and governments to build on the foundations laid by the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration by strengthening political accountability, promoting collective responsibility to manage refugee flows, adopting innovative funding and financing solutions to assist refugees and their host communities, and implementing new institutional and legal reforms to manage better refugee and migration flows.

Although our priority is getting governments to act, most governments are moving backwards, not forward. To fill the void, civil society has to mobilize now and put renewed pressure on governments to rise to the challenge of addressing the needs of the world’s most vulnerable – those who are stateless and whose numbers are disproportionately comprised of women and children. While civil society actors play a valiant, humanitarian role in supporting forcibly displaced persons by filling gaps through the provision of services that governments cannot or will not provide, they are under threat and massively under-resourced in their missions.

As a Council, we believe there is an opportunity to enlist the support of the world’s leading private foundations, which include the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford

¹ In a global survey by the WRMC, 95% of all respondents believe the international community needs to do more to share responsibility for refugee inflows, with too much responsibility falling on the shoulders of five countries (Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda and Germany) that host nearly 40% of the world’s refugees.

Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the IKEA Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the MacArthur Foundation, the Open Society Foundations and the Mastercard Foundation to help convene a global gathering of key civil society and refugee leaders to address the rapidly worsening plight of the world's forcibly displaced. Such a gathering should focus on how best to align donor priorities and mobilize substantial, additional resources to support the needs of refugees, host communities, and others who have been forcibly displaced.

We can't simply wait another year or more to address the plight of forcibly displaced persons. While ***A Renewed Call to Action*** highlights some of the Council's modest efforts to secure the implementation recommendation made in 2019, it importantly issues recommendations to governments, civil society, and foundations to be acted on immediately to initiate the concerted global action required to address the multiple challenges of conflict, climate change and acute hunger and starvation that millions of the world's forcibly displaced now face.



A Renewed Call to Action

A Grave Situation

In 2019, when the World Refugee & Migration Council published its Report, [**A Call to Action: Transforming the Global Refugee System**](#), roughly 68.5 million people had been displaced within and across borders. Forty million were internally displaced persons (IDPs), while 28.5 million were classified as refugees.

By 2022, that figure had risen to a stunning 100 million people or nearly one percent of the world's total population — a figure which the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grande, [**notes**](#) is “sobering and alarming in equal measure.”

These figures don't include millions of migrants forced to move by worsening economic conditions, famine, corruption, police brutality, and climate change. Climate change, in particular, is changing the refugee and migration paradigm: an average of 21.5 million each year have been forcibly displaced by weather-related events since 2008, and the surge could reach 1.2 billion by 2050, [**according to some estimates**](#).

Our Council decided it was time for an update and a renewed call to action. We surveyed a cohort of individuals associated with the Council who work with refugees and have offered observations that are incorporated into this Report.

New and Neglected Emergencies

In the past two years, the collapse of the Western-supported government in Afghanistan and its replacement by the Taliban, following the withdrawal of US forces from that country, precipitated rapidly deteriorating economic conditions and the flight of millions fleeing persecution. Millions more have been internally displaced by continuing conflict.² Thousands of Afghans, including many women and girls who seek asylum in the West, are trapped inside their country because the Taliban refuse to let them escape.

More recently, Russia's brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has [**forced more than 6 million Ukrainians to flee their country**](#). Millions more are internally displaced. The continuing conflict disproportionately affects children, almost two-thirds of whom have been forcibly displaced. Acute food shortages caused by the disruption of grain shipments from Ukraine and Russia also affect refugee communities worldwide. Millions are going hungry and face starvation.

While the world's attention focuses on Ukraine, we cannot forget that the “countries with the most neglected crises” [**reported by the Norwegian Refugee Council**](#) (NRC) are in sub-Saharan Africa measured by their severity and shortfall in political response, media attention and funding.

The massive increase in displacement in the past two decades can largely be traced to several significant interrelated factors: Breakdowns in governance, drought, food scarcity, and endemic violence in countries such as Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the

² At the time of writing there are 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees globally, and another 3.5 million are internally displaced ([UNHCR](#)).

Congo, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria and Venezuela have forcibly displaced millions.

Dangerous Backsliding on Borders and Toxic Narratives

The lack of consensus and collective action in the face of these developments is staggering. The trend of individual governments to assert their sovereignty by closing borders to those seeking asylum is alarming. Nor has the disturbing tendency to stereotype refugees as security threats while denying the valuable, if not vital, contributions they bring to their host communities. The toxic narrative we discussed in our 2019 report, A Call to Action, persists.

The actions of some governments point to dangerous backsliding.

- ▶ Europe has been [paying Turkey](#) to thwart the flow of migrants and refugees to Europe.
- ▶ Denmark is [sending refugees back to Syria because](#) the Danish government has decided that Syria is safe.
- ▶ Britain initially refused to accept refugees and [asylum seekers from Ukraine and has turned to Rwanda to relocate and process](#) people claiming asylum in the UK.
- ▶ Ukrainian refugees in Europe and elsewhere are [worried about declining local support](#) amidst the continuing war.
- ▶ The Biden administration has reinstated the inhumane Trump-era “remain in Mexico” policy for migrants and asylum seekers while holding thousands of others in private detention and deporting more than 20,000 Haitians back to Haiti. Some progress has been made with the [signing of the Los Angeles Declaration](#) at the 2022 Summit of the Americas. In the Declaration, 20 countries, including Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Central American Countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, pledged to expand legal pathways for migrants and refugees and provide new funding for host countries. How these pledges will be carried out remains to be seen.
- ▶ [South Africa](#) is witnessing a disturbing escalation of “hate speech and arson attacks...fueled by politicians and high-ranking officials who use migrants [and refugees] as the scapegoats for South Africa’s problems.”

COVID & Health Outcomes for Refugees and Migrants

The global pandemic has disrupted trade, travel, supply chains and led to a breakdown of public health. Less noticed is the retreat from supportive services and resources for displaced people. The worldwide erosion of public responses to the disease has eroded trust in government, leading to right-wing populist political movements that target refugees and migrants as scapegoats.

Recently, the UNHCR [conducted a study](#) on the global response to COVID-19 towards refugees, finding that as a collective, the international community “[fell short in protecting the rights of refugees](#)” around the world. At the WRMC’s [conference on COVID-19 and refugee women](#) with former Secretary of State and Honorary Chair of the WRMC, the late Madeleine Albright and the [Global Independent Refugee Women Leaders](#) (GIRWL) network, the WRMC heard from women refugees who noted they felt “relegated to the back of the queue” in state’s COVID-19 response strategies. Despite the necessity of treating vaccines as a public good, UN Secretary-General António Guterres [highlighted that vaccine nationalism moved “at full speed”](#) throughout the pandemic. As many countries began to see the light at the end of the tunnel for the distribution of vaccines, many people – particularly refugees and internally displaced persons – were left in the dark.

Just as troubling is the disadvantaged health status of refugees and migrants, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) has found that “Around the world, millions of refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations, such as low-skilled migrant workers, face poorer health outcomes than their host communities... This has dire consequences for the probability that the world will not achieve the health-related Sustainable Development Goals for these populations.” The vulnerable situation of these populations is exacerbated by “critical gaps in data and health information systems” and the need to engage refugee and migrant communities themselves in introducing “innovative ideas” to “drive their own “economic and social transformation.” In addition, the WHO underscores the importance of “implementing inclusive health systems that conform to the principle of the right to health for all and universal health coverage” for refugees and migrants in their host communities.

Women and Girl Refugees Hardest Hit by Global Pandemic

“We all know that refugees are the first and last responders to any crisis, especially the current one. The COVID-19 pandemic has been an issue that has hit many of us around the world, but it has hit many refugees, especially specifically the refugee women and girls, much harder. We’ve heard this from many refugee women and girls.

We, the refugee women, want to be heard, listened to and involved in policy discussions ... to bring solutions and collaboration to the issues we face.”

– Najeeba Wazefadost, GIRWL Co-founder

“[International efforts to combat vaccine nationalism] did not include the voices of refugees, and they did not bear any fruits. Access to COVID-19 vaccines for displaced people is still a huge cliff to climb.”

– Survey Participant

An Unacceptable Status Quo

These negative trends have been observed and confirmed by the general public. In a global survey conducted by the WRMC on the current state of the global refugee system, respondents, including refugees and migrants, members of civil society, government and private business, held pessimistic views towards the status quo. Over 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the current global refugee system is failing. In comparison, over 80% believed that the economic conditions driving migration have worsened since the WRMC published *A Call to Action* in 2019. Further, over 40% of respondents believed that there is less interest at the international level in collaboratively solving refugee and migration emergencies, and 95% of all respondents believe the international community needs to do more to share responsibility for refugee inflows.

“The refugee system developed during the 1950s is not up to the challenges of the 21st century.”

– Survey participant

Taking the Lead: A Critical Role for Civil Society, Refugees and The World’s Major Private Foundations

Many of the objectives outlined in the 2019 Global Compact on Refugees to create a sustainable, predictable and comprehensive refugee response model to support refugees have not been met. Pressures on host countries are increasing, not diminishing. Opportunities for refugees to become self-reliant are evaporating as the global economy suffers the twin perils of stagflation. Refugee access to third-country solutions, including resettlement and legal pathways, is constrained. And because of continuing conflict, the prospects of refugees returning in “safety and dignity” to their countries of origin are dim.

Involving Women in Decision-Making

“Women are the biggest victims of what is going on in terms of the virus as well as the economy.... Women are the victims as well the ones who are dealing with the issues in terms of education, of dealing with others. This type of conference points to the number of women that are involved, that are out there fighting all the time on behalf of others, and at the same time are not able to pursue their careers in terms of their potential, for running for office, or having businesses, or really getting an education.”

– Former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright

The next UN Global Refugee Forum will take place only in late 2023, but the need for urgent action to galvanize political will is now.

Although our priority is getting governments to act, most governments are moving backwards, not forward. To fill the political void, civil society has to mobilize now and put renewed pressure on governments to rise to the challenge of addressing the needs of the world’s most vulnerable – those who are stateless and whose numbers are disproportionately composed of women and children. We believe there is an opportunity to enlist the support of the world’s leading private foundations, which include the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the

IKEA Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the MacArthur Foundation, the Open Society Foundations and the Mastercard Foundation to help convene later this year a global gathering of key civil society and refugee leaders to address the rapidly worsening plight of the world's forcibly displaced. Such a gathering should focus on how best to align donor priorities and mobilize substantial, additional resources to support the needs of refugees, host communities, and others who have been forcibly displaced.

At the same time, such a gathering should aim at measures to strengthen political accountability, promote collective responsibility to manage refugee and migration flows, and secure the timely implementation of new institutional and legal pathways to accommodate refugees and migrants.

Planning for such a gathering should begin now. Although such meetings typically occur in New York or Geneva, we urge that it be held in a major capital in the global south. Countries in the global south are disproportionately affected by global refugee and migration flows, and their host communities desperately need sustained attention and support.



Taking Action

The global gathering on forced displacement we propose can build on the roadmap outlined three years ago in the WRMC's *A Call to Action*, where we called for a fundamental overhaul of the international refugee system created in the aftermath of the Second World War. As we noted then, too many countries were violating basic principles of humanity when they denied the right to asylum and failed to provide sufficient assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons. We urged governments to assume responsibility to protect and resettle those who have been forcibly displaced and to develop durable solutions for the displaced. We offered some 55 recommendations to transform the global refugee system.

Those recommendations focused on building on the foundations laid by the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration by strengthening political accountability, promoting collective responsibility to manage refugee flows, adopting innovative funding and financing solutions to assist refugees and their host communities, and implementing new institutional and legal reforms to manage better refugee and migration flows. We also stressed the importance of engaging refugees in decision-making processes at the national and international levels.

Our recommendations were informed by ten core principles which are worth restating:

- ▶ Despite the increased numbers, we face not a “refugee crisis” but rather a crisis in political leadership. Instead of promoting informed public opinion, political leaders stimulate anti-foreigner sentiment in their constituencies for political purposes.
- ▶ Those governments, including individual leaders, who trigger refugee flows and displace people must be held accountable for their actions, and those governments that fail to protect asylum seekers must be held responsible for their failure to do so.
- ▶ Protecting refugees and IDPs and finding solutions to their plight is a collective responsibility, not just the obligation of the countries where refugees first arrive or the state where IDPs are displaced.
- ▶ The needs of the host communities must be central to all work with displaced populations.
- ▶ Without sufficient, guaranteed funding, bold ideas for change will remain aspirational.
- ▶ Male bias in refugee policy and gender blindness in response to global displacement is no longer acceptable because “gender affects every stage of the refugee journey, from reception to durable solutions”. The specific vulnerabilities, needs, and capacities of women and girls, men and boys, and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are significantly different and must be fully considered.
- ▶ Meaningful engagement of refugees and IDPs in all their diversity is crucial for an effectively functioning system that upholds their rights and dignity.
- ▶ Institutional change and specific policies are needed to address the invisibility and lack of action toward IDPs.

- ▶ A broad, inclusive network of national governments, municipalities and mayors, regional organizations, private businesses and a vast array of civil society organizations is needed to address the challenges of displacement.
- ▶ There are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems; only political action can address the challenges of forced displacement

When we published *A Call to Action*, we did not want our recommendations to languish on bookshelves or collect dust in government filing cabinets, which is often the fate of many international commissions and major reports. We deliberately decided to actively promote and secure support for several of its key recommendations while championing the Report’s fundamental principles in our work and advocacy efforts.

We can report some modest success in our collective efforts. The WRMC has established two task forces with disparate membership devoted to a focused effort on two key priorities of the Council: the [Southern US Border](#) and [Anti-Corruption](#). Despite these achievements, much more work remains.

Repurposing Seized Assets to Benefit the Victims of Corruption

“This is new, this is something that hasn’t been done before. The World Refugee & Migration Council has worked on this for many years with Canadian leadership from Lloyd Axworthy, Allan Rock and others to try to look at the regimes of the world where dictators have essentially caused refugees. Countries are trying to support refugees and they don’t have the money. This was the initial understanding of how this legislation could act...and we think it could be beneficial in the Ukraine situation as well.”

— Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs

Repurposing Frozen Assets

A Call to Action recommended that “financial measures should be used to hold governments accountable for displacing people, specifically, by repurposing frozen assets and working with international financial institutions.”

We argued that while confiscation of kleptocrats’ ill-gotten gains was a way to strengthen accountability, it also had the potential to ease “financial shortfalls in host countries and communities” given the millions if not billions of dollars that corrupt leaders and their supporters have stashed in bank accounts and other tangible assets overseas.

The practice in Canada and worldwide has been for governments to freeze assets associated with corrupt foreign officials. The Council proposed to go one step further and confiscate and repurpose those assets for the benefit of refugees, the internally displaced and others who have been harmed or subject to human rights violations committed by those whose assets are frozen.

We are pleased that the Canadian government introduced **amendments to the [Special Economic Measures Act](#)** in its Spring 2022 budgetary estimates, giving it the authority not just to freeze but also to seize the assets of persons who are responsible for “gross and systematic human rights violations...in a foreign state or acts of significant corruption.” Importantly, by providing for court involvement in the forfeiture process — one of our key

recommendations – the amendments also introduce transparency and an appropriate measure of due process.

The Canadian government's proposed amendments are similar to Bill S-217, or the [***Frozen Assets Repurposing Act***](#), which was first tabled in spring 2019 as a private member's bill in the Senate of Canada by Senator Ratna Omidvar, a Council member.

“[FARA] is a tangible way to hold those who drive refugees to leave and provide resources to the countries that host the refugees. It provides for accountability of those guilty of committing egregious human rights violations and financial support to their victims.”

– Survey participant

In 2019, the Council also discussed these proposed measures with officials and legislators in other countries, notably the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom. It will continue with these discussions while referring to the new Canadian legislation as a model for other countries to emulate.

The Council welcomes Canada's initiative, which introduces political accountability and legal due process in the disposition of assets for those complicit in gross human rights violations and corruption. The legislation is especially timely given the situation in Ukraine and the need to secure additional resources for the millions who the actions of the Russian government have forcibly displaced. The innovative legislation demonstrates significant Canadian leadership on the world stage and establishes a path for other states to follow. All G7 governments have committed to adopting similar measures in the context of Ukraine, while the European Commission has approved a pilot project to the same effect.

Apart from achieving greater accountability and providing an essential source of funding for those who have been harmed and suffered gross human rights abuses, the legislation will also have a significant deterrent effect on those who might otherwise intend to park their ill-gotten gains in Canada.

The Council sees an opportunity to initiate a round of diplomatic efforts to share the model with other governments and assist in its implementation.

Promoting an International Anti-Corruption Court

The current phase of our work also focuses on developing a complementary international instrument, namely, creating an International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC). On December 16, 2021, the Canadian Prime Minister's [***Mandate Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs***](#) directed Minister Mélanie Joly to work with international partners to help establish an International Anti-Corruption Court to prevent corrupt officials and authoritarian governments from impeding development that should benefit their citizens. The WRMC's [***Canadian Task Force Against Global Corruption***](#) was instrumental in persuading both major political parties in the 2021 federal election to include in platforms pledges to create an IACC. Similarly, in its *Summit for Democracy 2021 Submission and Commitments*, the Government of Canada stated that “Canada will convene a national

high level, multi-sectoral roundtable to explore options to strengthen the international legal framework and architecture to combat corruption globally."

The Council has been a champion of this initiative to Canadian parliamentarians. We are working closely with our US partner, [Integrity Initiatives International](#), and other international civil society partners to promote the Court's creation. We will organise a series of roundtables so Canadians understand better why this initiative is necessary and conduct in-depth research on the critical elements of an IACC treaty.

Strengthening Regional Institutional Capacity

A Call to Action recommended the support of "regional organizations' capacity to prevent conflict, strengthen the rule of law and reform of the security sector and the national and municipal levels."

The Council's high-level [North and Central American Task Force on Migration](#) has taken this recommendation several steps further and identified concrete ways to fill critical governance gaps and promote better regional coordination of the often-disjointed national responses to migration in the Central American region.

The Task Force brought together regional experts and commissioned in-depth research on key migration issues from Central American and Mexican researchers. Partners include the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, the Colegio de México, the Migration Policy Institute and the Inter-American Dialogue, with financial support from the Government of Canada.

The Task Force stressed regional responsibility sharing in its final Report and outlined specific ways to improve regional mechanisms. It said that a comprehensive, strategic, regional approach is urgently needed to address migration from Northern Central America and calls for the creation of a new North and Central American Council on Migration with the full participation of migrant communities, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, donors, financial institutions, and the private sector.

Based on the model of the Arctic Council, this new Council would bring a fresh approach to coordinating concrete actions among the many institutions in the region and offer a new platform, as many leaders have called for, to engage key stakeholders on an ongoing basis to address the deep-rooted causes of migration. Discussions are now underway with key governments and donor institutions to advance this new regional governance and cooperation approach.

In addition, the Task Force urges governments in the region to address the political, economic and institutional drivers of migration. There are no quick fixes to address the many causes of migration; fundamental political, institutional and economic change is necessary.

The United States, Canada and Mexico must increase legal channels for Central Americans to migrate through labour migration and protection pathways. Central Americans are migrating through irregular means because there are not enough legal pathways to accommodate current migration flows in an orderly and predictable manner.

All regional actors — from Central American governments to donors, international NGOs and financial institutions — must find ways to support the active engagement of civil society and indigenous communities to address the drivers of migration, support migrants and returnees, and advocate for substantive policy changes. Civil society actors, including faith-based organizations, play a valiant, humanitarian role in the region but are under threat and under-resourced while filling gaps by providing services that governments cannot or will not provide. A North and Central American Council on Migration would provide an appropriate forum for such engagement, including by donors, on a regular, institutionalized basis.

One bright moment for migration in the region came at the June 2022 Summit of the Americas event, which delivered the [Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection](#). The declaration echoed many of the Task Force's recommendations partly because of Task Force members' work with officials throughout the region. This work was highlighted during an important side event in Los Angeles organized by the Council with the Organization of American States, Migration Policy Institute and other partners. A major launch event of the Task Force in Mexico City with the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations just before the Summit provided Mexican and international organization officials with policy options for regional discussions.

Addressing the Challenges of Host Communities

A Call to Action recommended that "academic and policy researchers create a displacement assessment tool for application in conflict and potential conflict situations, to assess the human and other costs that are likely to occur if a conflict erupts or continues. This assessment could enable all potential parties to a conflict to understand the consequences of their actions and encourage donors to intervene to prevent conflicts. Efforts should be made within the assessment to ensure that the gendered and age-related impacts are effectively identified."

The Council has supported the efforts of local researchers led by the WRMC's Vice President of Research, Beth Ferris, in the Middle East to develop and refine analytical tools to examine [refugee impacts on host communities in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey](#), which have hosted Syrian refugees since the very beginning of the country's civil war in 2011. The research was supported by the International Development Research Centre and Cuso International and carried out by the Centre for Lebanese Studies, IGAM Academy in Turkey and three Jordanian economists and was supported by a research advisory group of experts from the region.

Seeing the Contributions that Refugees can Make to Host Countries

"There is, as underlined in the reports on Syrian refugees, a need for a 'primary change from seeing refugees as a burden to host countries to seeing them as human capital to be used in meeting the development priorities of host countries.' — to move away from the vulnerability-based approach to a development approach to humanize the stats — so to speak. We need to move away from relief to development, empowerment, and entrustment of refugee populations — as this is causing some angst."

— **Honorary Chair HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal**

“A major weakness of the refugee system is that there is no fair mechanism for sharing the responsibility of protecting and assisting refugees.”

– Survey participant

Currently, over 5 million Syrians live in these three countries, each of which has its unique political, social and economic context. As the Syrian conflict either winds down or enters a new phase, the fate of the refugees depends on political and economic developments in Syria, the willingness of host countries to allow them to remain, and the international support for host countries.

While the international community has mobilized significant amounts of humanitarian assistance, the host governments need additional support and innovative strategies to provide the refugees with a chance for security, self-reliance and dignity in their countries of refuge. Pressures on the refugees to return to Syria are increasing and are likely to grow in the coming months and years.

The work of these local researchers seeks to answer and propose solutions for realistic alternatives for Syrian refugees and the governments that host them in the medium- to long-term and ways in which host countries be supported to continue hosting refugees in light of growing pressures for return.

Refugees as First Responders in Africa

“During the COVID-19 total lockdown, UNHCR and its implementing partners were unable to have direct access to refugees. To fill the gap, refugee-led organisations became first responders. In Uganda, legal services were provided by trained refugee paralegals and food aid was distributed to refugees by refugee leaders who had direct access to the homes of refugees.

A Call to Action urged donors to dramatically increase funding to host governments, UNHCR and other agencies. But, since 2019 and the rapid growth of the localization of humanitarian work, there is an urgent need to increase funding for locally based NGOs and refugee-led organisations.”

– Devota Nuwe, Head of Programs at Refugee Law Project, Uganda

Innovative Financing

A Call to Action called on “interested states and the financial community to develop a bank and fund manager forum for refugees, to be a standing body that would draw on domestic, regional and international capacity and expertise to develop innovative financing mechanisms, such as refugee bonds (akin to “green bonds” in climate change) and other private equity vehicles to promote growth and investment in refugee-hosting states and within refugee communities.”

While there has been some progress internationally in creating new platforms for finance, investment and philanthropy in refugee-hosting countries, much more can and should be done to leverage resources in private equity markets to provide housing, education, medical services, and seed capital for refugee entrepreneurs.

Over the last several years, Colombia has received close to two million refugees from Venezuela due to the ongoing severe economic and political problems. This inflow of mainly poor and unskilled Venezuelans, coupled with the already significant number of internally displaced Colombians (IDPs), has become a major challenge for Colombia and exacerbates an already chronic shortage of affordable housing and social services, adding to crime and urban poverty. The uncertainty with COVID-19 and other political and economic challenges only adds to the problems.

The World Refugee & Migration Council provided a small amount of seed money to [support an innovative pilot project to build housing for forcibly displaced migrants in Colombia](#). Working with local Colombian partners, the project leaders have stimulated investment in a project to build nearly 500 affordable housing units in a northern Colombian city, hard hit by migrants under the rent-to-own Government subsidy program. The units are now being constructed and delivered, and demand is brisk. The partners are currently working on expanding this initial project and discussing with several sizeable international capital providers to grow the project in other areas of Colombia.

Climate Change & Forced Displacement

A Call to Action called for establishing a process to create an independent intergovernmental panel on refugees and displaced persons (IPRDP), using the highly successful Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change model. At the same time, the Report noted that "Many more millions of people in the future may be forced to flee their communities, and eventually their countries, because of climate change. It is worth the effort to devote substantial resources of time, energy and funds to strengthen the present global refugee system to meet the needs of both today's and tomorrow's refugees and IDPs."

Climate change's relatively slow-onset effects, such as sea level rise, desertification, water salinization and associated sudden onset events like floods, hurricanes, and droughts, have become significant drivers of human displacement. The World Health Organisation has [recently stated](#) that WHO noted that "the climate crisis is the single biggest health threat facing humanity". Of the 33 million new internal displacements in 2019, 25 million occurred because of disasters and climate events. The World Bank recently estimated that 143 million people in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia will be displaced due to climate change by 2050 (about 55% of the developing world's population).

"Right now, more people are displaced by natural disasters and the effects of climate change. The failure to legally recognise these people creates a protection gap."

– Survey Participant

Consistent with the World Refugee & Migration Council's mandate to offer bold strategic recommendations for transforming the global refugee system, the Council is now initiating a research-driven advocacy campaign to promote innovative solutions for the worldwide governance of climate displacement and 1.) Create defensible criteria that are gender responsive and grounded in human rights that allow us to identify when and how

climate change and environmental degradation lead to displacement; 2.) Develop model domestic legislation and trial best practices for climate displacement claims through new determination proceedings, and 3.) Promote a cohesive approach to climate migration internationally and multilaterally with like-minded partners.

“There doesn’t seem to be a system to coordinate the needs of people displaced by conflict or natural disaster.”

– Survey Participant

Inclusive Governance

A Call to Action advised interested states and other stakeholders to develop concrete measures aligned with their national action plans on women, peace and security (as urged in UN Security Council Resolution 1325) and on youth, peace and security (UN Security Council Resolution 2250), to increase donor support to civil society organizations (including women’s groups, youth groups, faith leaders and the private sector) and national human rights institutions working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding; develop opportunities for increased interactions between peacemaking and humanitarian actors.”

Refugees have historically been excluded from systematic and meaningful inclusion in high-level policy and decision-making governance areas with few exceptions. As the Report noted, that is doubly true of women and girl refugees and IDPs who “face double discrimination and exclusion.”

During the past three years, the WRMC has worked closely with and provided direct support to the [Global Independent Refugee Women Leaders \(GIRWL\)](#), a group of refugee women-led initiatives, networks, and advocates. GIRWL members are working closely with and for refugee women to 1.) Increase refugee women’s participation in shaping policies; 2.) Build refugee women’s capacity to engage locally, nationally, regionally, and globally; and 3.) Strategically advocate for and promote inclusive human rights approaches to forced displacement.

“There have been improvements in involving refugees and migrants in international consultations but little improvement in integrating their ideas into policymaking or practice.”

– Survey Participant

GIRWL was founded in December 2019 during the Global Refugee Forum to ensure that the commitments made to refugee women and girls in the Global Compact on Refugees – including gender equality, the implementation of the UNHCR Age Gender and Diversity (AGD) Policy and addressing the different needs of girls, women and men—are fully implemented. GIRWL aims to empower, inspire and equip refugee women to become leaders in their homes and communities.

Helping Victims of Torture and Major Human Rights Abuses

A Call to Action commended "ongoing efforts to increase accountability of humanitarian actors to refugees and IDPs" and called "on both public and private donors to require that all of their beneficiaries put in place gender-responsive accountability measures." The Report also underscored the importance of securing funding and support for "gender-specific needs (sexual, psychological and reproductive health, and sexual- and gender-based violence)" and the proper resettlement of those psychologically and physically traumatized by war and conflict.

In partnership with the global law firm Reed Smith, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture and other international organizations, the World Refugee & Migration Council supports resettling refugees in Canada who have suffered torture and sexual violence. The [Lamp Lifeboat Ladder](#) partnership combines the private sector's creativity with the public sector's regulatory capacity and civil society's social representation to protect 90 refugee families and help them rebuild their lives. World Refugee & Migration Council member Allan Rock is an active member of Lamp Lifeboat Ladder. Today there are more than 25 million refugees around the world. Less than 1% are ever resettled to safe countries. Most live in camps or shadow communities and are excluded from participating in our communities, economies, and world. The Council's main recommendation for addressing this issue is its call for shared responsibility, especially in responding to the humanitarian needs of people who are forcibly displaced and have been major victims of torture and human rights abuses.

This initiative comes at a critically important moment. Many states have slashed or ended funding for the UN and international humanitarian organizations. Such reductions have crippled programs aimed at protecting refugees. The initiative builds upon Canada's long and exceptional history of refugee protection and creates an additional privately funded pathway for protecting refugees in overwhelming need.

The next step in the project's development is leveraging private investments and donations from individuals, businesses and foundations to provide housing, rehabilitation care, psychosocial support and employment opportunities to torture survivors resettled in Canada and establish a program similar to the one for Syrian refugees for Central America.



Conclusions & Recommendations

In highlighting our recommendations and our modest efforts to secure the implementation of some of them, we recognize that a much bigger, concerted global action is required now to address the multiple challenges of conflict, climate change and acute hunger and starvation that millions of the world's forcibly displaced now face. We can't simply wait another year or more to address their plight or expect an increasingly sclerotic intergovernmental system to rise to the challenge. We believe that the world's leading private foundations can help fill the gap by organizing a world gathering to develop a concrete action plan to address the immediate humanitarian needs of the forcibly displaced — a plan that will bring significant new resources to the table and empower those who are stateless and living in dire conditions and perilous circumstances in our troubled world.

Key Recommendations

For governments:

- ▶ Don't just freeze but seize and repurpose the assets of those responsible for causing forced displacement to support those forcibly displaced through bad governance or aggression. Countries can look to Canada's Special Economic Measures Act based on the WRMC's 2019 recommendations and legislative proposals to repurpose frozen assets to help the forcibly displaced.
- ▶ Develop concrete measures aligned with national action plans on women and peace and security (as urged in UN Security Council Resolution 1325) and on youth and peace and security (UN Security Council Resolution 2250) to increase donor support to civil society organizations (including women's groups, youth groups, faith leaders and the private sector) and national human rights institutions working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding; develop opportunities for increased interactions between peacemaking and humanitarian actors."

For civil society:

- ▶ Fill gaps left by states – through unwillingness or inability – to support forcibly displaced persons; continue to focus on customary drivers of displacement but draw awareness and develop solutions to new displacement drivers, particularly climate change.
- ▶ Promote leadership roles for women and youth, giving a voice to more than half of those forcibly displaced globally.

For foundations:

- ▶ Convene a meeting of refugee leaders, key civil society organizations, and donors to align donor priorities and mobilize substantial, additional resources to support the needs of refugees, host communities, and others who have been forcibly displaced.
- ▶ Organise a fund to support civil society organisations and refugees to improve the conditions endured by forcibly displaced people.

Since 2019, the work of the World Refugee & Migration Council has been generously supported by grants from the IKEA Foundation, the International Development Research Centre, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Government of Canada, the Jerome Greene Foundation and the Shapiro Foundation. The Council was originally established through the support of the Centre for International Governance Innovation.



World Refugee & Migration Council

The World Refugee & Migration Council offers bold thinking on how the international community can respond to refugees and the forcibly displaced through cooperation & responsibility sharing.

www.wrmcouncil.org

[Twitter.com/wrmcouncil](https://twitter.com/wrmcouncil)
[Facebook.com/wrmcouncil](https://facebook.com/wrmcouncil)
info@wrmcouncil.org

