



BEYOND CONSULTATION

Unpacking the most essential components of meaningful participation by refugee leaders

Reflection paper

GLOBAL REFUGEE-LED NETWORK (GRN)

EUROPEAN COALITION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES (EU-COMAR)

NEW WOMEN CONNECTORS (NWC)



European Coalition of Migrants
and Refugees (EU-COMAR)
A Key For Inclusion



Research on forced displacement reveals a wide gap between policy processes and the people that such processes seek to assist. This paper proposes actionable recommendations on how to operationalize the concept of 'meaningful refugee participation' in decision-making processes that affect the lives of refugees. There is a need to go beyond tokenistic participation and to genuinely empower refugees to have influence over the design, implementation and evaluation of refugee-focused programmes. The contributions of refugees themselves must also be enhanced in ways that can help contribute to a paradigmatic shift in the global infrastructure of refugee governance.

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For further information on the issues raised in this reflection paper, please email info@europeancoalition.org or info@newwomenconnectors.com.

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Cover photo: A group mapping out the pandemic's effects on women at a Diversity Dialogue Fora event in Amsterdam (2021). Credit: Rob Godfried.
Back cover photo: A group of women compiling a chart at a team-building event in Rome (2022). Credit: TD Liska.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU-COMAR	European Coalition of Migrants and Refugees
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GRF	Global Refugee Forum
GRN	Global Refugee-Led Network
HLOM	High Level Officials Meeting
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWC	New Women Connectors
RLO	Refugee Led Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. INTRODUCTION

This reflection paper aims to improve the theorization of ‘meaningful refugee participation’ as envisaged by the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).¹ It takes the GCR as a very important international consensus document, or a non-binding UN declaration, for policy and practice-oriented conceptualization of meaningful participation by refugees in decision-making processes that affect their lives.² Taking these observations as key departure points, the paper analyses the direct experiences and reflections of refugee advocates and refugee-led organizations (RLOs) on all matters relating to meaningful refugee participation. Building on scholarly debates about meaningful participation by refugees and narrative studies, it focuses specifically on how refugees themselves define such processes. It acknowledges the depth of the layered experiences of refugees, taking account of these levels of participation in the narrative approach. It concludes by proposing actionable recommendations for reform of the global infrastructure of refugee governance.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

Definitions differ to some extent, but this paper adopts a conceptual framework for ‘meaningful participation’ that was originally articulated by the Global Refugee-Led Network (GRN) in the context of its involvement in the 2019 Global Refugee Forum (GRF). For the GRN, meaningful refugee participation is a process that enables refugees, regardless of their ‘location, legal recognition, gender, identity, and demographics’, to take part:

*... in fora and processes where strategies are being developed and/or decisions are being made (including at local, national, regional, and global levels, and especially when they facilitate interactions with host states, donors, or other influential bodies), in a manner that is ethical, sustained, safe, and supported financially.*³

The GRN’s theorization resonates with similar working definitions of ‘meaningful participation’ that have been in use in recent years by leading international NGOs, such as Oxfam.⁴ This can be seen as part of an emerging global consensus that refugee-related processes can be improved by strengthening the voice and self-representation of refugees in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes. It also forms a key component of the Refugee Participation Pledge, a multi-stakeholder coalition galvanized by the GRN in the context of the 2019 GRF.⁵ However, there is little evidence on what kind of tools work best, and the work and contribution of RLOs remain poorly understood. This points to a need for more research to help guide developing practice in this area, and this kind

of research is best done based on the lived experience of refugees and by refugees themselves.

2.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This paper adopts the research methodology of participatory action research (PAR), as developed by O’Neil, Woods and Webster and other scholars.⁶ Due to its democratic nature, this is a preferred approach for deciphering questions relating to meaningful participation by refugees. The study is based on data collected from a set of eight key informant interviews (KIs) and five focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted with refugees, refugee advocates and leaders of RLOs in the period June–December 2021. Due to the limitations imposed by COVID-19, the data collection was done entirely in virtual forums. The KIs were conducted with refugee advocates or leaders in the following regional chapters of the GRN: Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America and Oceania. The FGDs were conducted in a hybrid format encompassing traditional qualitative research methodology and improvised techniques of data collection via online consultations and webinars. In each of the five FGDs, there were a minimum of 20 participants and a maximum of 25, with a total minimum threshold of 100 participants across all sessions. The FGDs took place in breakout sessions of a Refugee-led Refugee Week that took place from 20–26 June 2021.

Additional data were gathered from other processes: New Women Connectors’ Leading Resilience project;⁷ and recorded online gatherings, webinars, a side event⁸ and a GRN stocktaking event conducted in the context of UNHCR’s High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) in December 2021, which was a mid-term review of the GRF and a follow-up process of the GCR. The latter event, during which some tentative findings of this research were partially tested, brought together over 100 refugees and leaders of RLOs and other stakeholders from around the world to share progress since the first GRF and to identify priorities for the first HLOM. It produced an outcome document whose main recommendations are closely linked with the overarching theme of this research project, namely the meaningful participation of refugees.⁹

All data gathered in the course of this research have been analysed using thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke,¹⁰ to identify patterns of meaning and to explore the narrative and understanding of refugees about refugee leadership. Data from the KIs and FGDs have been anonymized to protect the privacy of respondents. Based on the approach of Hannah Arendt to the refugee experience, reflexivity has been used to triangulate data and to demonstrate transparency in the research process.¹¹ Respondents were approached through the existing networks of the lead authors. According to Shah’s phenomenology of ‘the researcher and the researched’,¹² the authors’ backgrounds as refugee leaders come with a very important ‘ontological privilege’, as it endows them with a refined understanding of the burning issues concerning meaningful participation by refugees.

2.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this exercise is to inform policy and practice in the field of refugee governance and decision-making processes that affect the lives of refugees. It helps to identify patterns of how refugees themselves understand the concept of meaningful participation. By applying a refugee lens, the research engages with the question of how meaningful refugee participation is being applied in such processes.¹³ It asks further: What is 'participation' according to refugees' experiences? How do refugees negotiate power relations to resist or to cope with exclusionary discourses and practices?

3. ANALYSIS OF MAIN FINDINGS

Thematic analysis of the research data repeatedly showed two contradictory perceptions of refugees: one of refugees as vulnerable and simply in need of salvation and another emphasizing their agency and empowerment. By placing itself at the mid-point of these contradictory narratives, the study confronts perceptions of victimhood with insights gleaned from the narratives of refugee leaders, by exploring the various ways in which refugees are taking action to change their situations. Based on key observations made from the reflections of refugees, it also proposes ways in which meaningful participation can be achieved in policy-making processes relating to refugees. For a better understanding of the thematic analysis, further elaboration of the theorization of 'participation' is helpful.

3.1. THE IMPERATIVE OF 'SITUATED KNOWLEDGE' IN THEORIZING MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

The thematic analysis of this paper, which also contributes to theorizing meaningful refugee participation, builds on Hart's sociological tool the 'Ladder of Participation'.¹⁴ Hart originally developed this tool to visualize the degree of participation that children and youth have in decision making about policies that affect them. In a similar way, this paper uses an adapted ladder of participation framework to assess to what degree refugees are involved in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This adapted framework identifies eight major steps in decision-making processes for refugees, which are summarized in reverse chronological order (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The eight steps of refugee participation, based on Hart's Ladder of Participation

Step 8. Refugee-initiated, shared decision making with non-refugee policy makers

Step 7. Refugee-initiated and directed

Step 6. Non-refugee-initiated, shared decision making with refugee leaders

Step 5. Refugee leaders consulted and informed

Step 4. Assigned but not informed

Step 3. Tokenism

Step 2. Decoration

Step 1. Manipulation

In a much broader research agenda, the concept of meaningful refugee participation can include refugees playing a larger role in knowledge production processes around forced displacement. In this regard, Bahram's conception of 'a stateless standpoint epistemology'¹⁵ is a very important analytical tool. Rooted in feminist standpoint theory,¹⁶ it postulates that knowledge about forced displacement must also be produced from the standpoint of the most affected people themselves, who should never be relegated merely to 'reductionist ascriptions' or 'pragmatically convenient roles' of 'subjects, informants, or interlocutors'.¹⁷ In that sense, the objective is also one of producing knowledge that 'is not about being more neutral or employing more observations', but instead is based on knowledge emanating from the conviction 'that reality is subjective, and that 'strong objectivity' can be found in the standpoint of those who live, experience and challenge that reality'.¹⁸ As will be shown below, some recurring themes that emerged from the KIs and FGDs provided strong support for this argument.

3.2. THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF REFUGEES

The KIs and the FGDs focused attention on the challenges that refugees and RLOs face in decision-making processes affecting their lives in different regions and countries: Western Sahara, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, some European countries and Latin America. In the KIs, informants were in agreement that there was a need for greater participation by refugees in local, national, regional and international forums to overcome existing challenges, while acknowledging that some big steps have been taken by refugees themselves over the past few years. Each respondent contributed a different angle on meaningful participation, according to their professional, educational and other backgrounds. However, the overall theme emerging from their responses aligns very much with the widely acknowledged social theory that the most successful social movements are those that are led by the most affected people, simply because when those with lived experience have the tools to lead such movements the impacts are extraordinary.¹⁹

The importance of refugees' lived experiences in conceptualizing what 'meaningful participation' actually means was highlighted in one of the FGDs with refugee leaders, in which a proposal was put forward for the creation of a new tool of understanding. Participants indicated that the tool could draw inspiration from CARE's Gender Marker Guidance.²⁰ Using a five-level grading system (ranging from harmful through neutral, sensitive,

responsive and transformative), the Gender Marker Guidance measures the level of gender integration into programming, which enables a quantifiable assessment of programme activities. In the grading, a harmful practice receives a grade of zero, the worst level of performance. A transformative practice receives a grade of five, this being the best performance. Designed to be used in combination with monitoring, evaluation and accountability systems,²¹ the Guidance can help policy makers and practitioners to 'reflect on the integration of gender in order to learn from and improve the gendered approach of their work'.²²

Participants suggested that ongoing efforts to conceptualize meaningful refugee participation could glean insightful lessons from this model. It is also imperative to sensitize organizations working in forced displacement about its importance. In the discussion, it was also observed that, despite the best intentions, research, humanitarian and policy interventions in forced displacement that do not reach the highest possible level, i.e. 'transformative', cannot be considered conducive to the meaningful participation of refugees. This requires an approach that goes beyond mere tokenistic participation by, or consultation with, refugees in projects and programmes, as is shown by the experience of New Women Connectors (NWC), an RLO from the Netherlands.

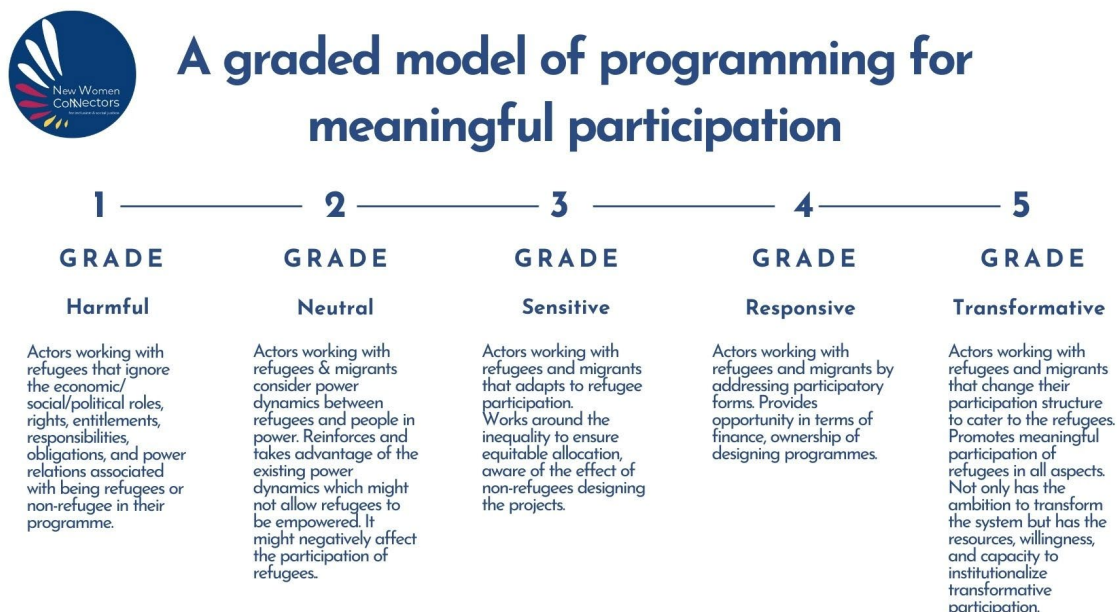
In promoting the objective of genuine empowerment for refugees, NWC has proposed a framework of transformative participation which it describes as 'an infinity model of participation' (Figure 2).²³ Incorporating some key elements from Hart's Ladder of Participation²⁴ and from CARE's Gender Marker Guidance,²⁵ this model envisages the interaction of different actors (including refugees) in the context of unbalanced power relations, where there is an urgent need to hear the voices of refugees and consider their inputs meaningfully. In this way, the model also resonates with the guiding motto of the GRN: 'Nothing about us without us'.²⁶

Figure 2: NWC's infinity model of participation



The infinity model of participation approach has close similarities to the refugee-focused model of programming shown in Figure 3, which is based on CARE's Gender Marker Guidance.

Figure 3: A graded model of programming for meaningful participation, based on CARE's Gender Marker Guidance



Some important observations were gleaned from the KIs and FGDs about some elements of this model of refugee programming. Echoing the shortcomings described by Grade 2 of the model, almost all interviewees said that they had been invited to consultations in high-level meetings by state and multilateral institutions but had not been financially compensated for their time. This is an example of a 'neutral' institutional practice whereby actors take advantage of existing power relations. In contrast, one interviewee (Interviewee 4, 5 October 2021) pointed to another practice whereby they had been granted funds for their work with Sudanese refugee children, something that has helped them to achieve visibility and hence obtain more grants for other projects. Such practices, if sustained on a long-term basis, have the potential of receiving a Grade 5, transformative, ranking.

3.3. THE DETERMINANTS OF EMPOWERMENT

Participants in the KIs and the FGDs drew attention to legal and political challenges and obstacles to refugees' meaningful participation in host countries, including efforts to influence the policy of those countries, particularly in matters relating to family reunification and resettlement. They were in agreement about the importance of coordinating action to overcome such challenges (based on their lived experience). Of particular importance for this paper is one key observation that emerged from thematic analysis of the research data and is already well established in the literature of forced displacement. The lives of many refugees are characterized by 'pathological uprootedness',²⁷ and in this context family reunion and resettlement occupy a central place in their day-to-day lives, but they themselves have little say on these processes. For many refugees,

family reunion and resettlement are important tools of empowerment, as can be seen from the evidence of one interviewee, a refugee leader based in Turkey (Box 1).

Box 1: The gap between promises and needs

Interviewee 1 (15 September 2021) is currently working in Turkey and is part of the MENA chapter of the GRN. He noted that resettlement issues vary from country to country and pointed as a good example to discrepancies between commitments made in the 2019 GRF and those made by the European Union and some of its Member States, which are based on their own priorities. He remarked: 'The EU decided to accept approximately 20,000 resettlement applications to Europe over a period of two years. In contrast, there are 80 million applications for resettlement with UNHCR alone. Denmark for its part said: we have this new law approved by the Danish Parliament and we will not accept any more resettlement applications.'

The problem of 'Decoration,' which forms Step 2 of the refugee ladder of participation (Figure 1), was raised by some key informants. One, a refugee living in Germany who is involved in community work, spoke about how refugees are not directly involved in matters that have a bearing on their lives: 'As a refugee, and not a refugee leader, I can't feel that much change ... I was speaking to somebody from the government in Germany, and I said: "You know you have this immigration law ... it is not exactly good because if at the end of the day women, the elderly and poor people are suffering somewhere, they cannot afford an application for resettlement ... We are trying to create safer pathways' (Interviewee 2, 5 October 2021).

Funding is a crucial aspect of the discourse on meaningful refugee participation and empowerment. As in all other areas of humanitarian programming, the efforts of RLOs may prove to be ineffective if they continue to operate in the context of meagre financial and human resources. Critical barriers such as lack of long-term core finance limit opportunities for meaningful refugee participation. This was reflected in the comments of another key informant, who has founded an RLO in Italy (Interviewee 5, 15 October 2021). This informant noted that securing funding for their work had been a struggle. They are regularly invited to high-level meetings to showcase their work, which reflects on its visibility, but they continue to face a daunting shortage of financial resources.

The KIs were conducted with different stakeholders at different levels, and their responses to a large extent depended on their personal circumstances and their status. However, some common patterns could be seen. For instance, in most refugee centres there are problems in establishing a direct flow of information between the relevant authorities and refugees. In recent years, however, there have been some new developments, such as information being provided to refugee leaders, for example in the form of involving them in conferences related to refugee rights – albeit to a limited extent. Nonetheless, in contrast with the previous situation where no information at all was provided, these developments might appear to be promising, although much more remains to be done.

3.4. THE ELEMENTS OF CONSULTATION, INVOLVEMENT AND COLLABORATION

Consultation, involvement and collaboration were among the most important themes that emerged from the KIIs and the FGDs. On consultation, some informants noted that while consultation does happen, it takes the form of exploitation, as refugee leaders are not well compensated financially for their time and input. They are provided with a seat at the table, but levels of representation are very low. In most cases, the seat appears to be tokenistic as refugees' concerns are not properly heard and no action is taken to follow up on their concerns.

In terms of involvement too, informants pointed to major problems with follow-up mechanisms for recommendations made by RLOs, with follow-up actions rarely taken. This diminishes the value of meaningful involvement and participation, and typifies the problem of tokenism, which is Step 3 of the refugee ladder of participation. This problem was summed up in the observations of Interviewee 4, an RLO leader from Sudan (Box 2).

Box 2: Gaps on the ground

The work of Interviewee 4, an RLO leader from Sudan (5 October 2021), was recognized by an international NGO but not by the relevant UN agency in the country. Only a year after the NGO had recognized the RLO's work did the UN country office finally become aware of its existence, and seemed to be surprised by it at this late stage. This provides a good illustration of the gaps that exist in the localization efforts of UN agencies in some countries that host large numbers of refugees, including Sudan.

In terms of collaboration, the research data point to the fact that some RLOs have started to undertake collaborative work under their own initiative. NWC in the Netherlands is one example of this: it undertakes capacity-building programmes for both local RLOs and municipalities on leadership skills, and also provides guidance to help establish RLOs in other countries. NWC's role in activities of this kind was mentioned by one interviewee (Interviewee 4) who described how the organization helped them to network with other refugee leaders.

3.5. DEMOCRATIZING THE GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF REFUGEE GOVERNANCE

In several of the online consultations conducted in the run-up to the HLQM in December 2021, an important theme that featured repeatedly was the GRN's long-term objective of reforming the global infrastructure of refugee governance. One key step towards achieving this goal is for RLOs, such as the GRN, to secure a seat or at least observer status on the Executive Committee (ExCom) of UNHCR. As an interim solution until a long-term mechanism can be devised, such a seat could be modelled on the status of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) in its formal working relationship with UNHCR. Another major theme related to this issue is the level of participation by refugees in key international events, such as the

HLOM and the GRF, the biennial and quadrennial events (respectively) established by the GCR. The GRN aims to ensure a refugee participation rate of 25% in such forums. There is still a long way to go to reach that benchmark, but there were some promising developments at the HLOM of December 2021, which saw a record number of refugees take part.

At the closing session of the HLOM on 15 December 2021, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi noted that, of a total of 1,300 attendees, 130 were refugees.²⁸ This represents a 10% participation rate by refugees, which is promising, and an increase from the number of 70 refugee representatives who participated in the 2019 GRF. GRN records show that in the run-up to the HLOM RLOs (in particular the GRN itself) expressed concern that the number of places reserved for refugees at the event, which was initially planned to be in-person, amounted to only 2% of the total. It appears that the sudden change of plan that saw the HLOM become an entirely virtual event, forced by COVID-19, enabled a greater level of participation by refugees. However, in terms of the 25% participation level demanded by the GRN for the next GRF, much needs to be done between now and 2023. If that event takes place in a traditional offline format, there is no guarantee that the required level of representation can be achieved.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, from the desktop review, data gathered from the KIs and FGDs and the GRN's continued participation in important global events such as the HLOM and the GRF, a number of key observations can be made. In most cases, refugees are seen as being vulnerable and in need of assistance from others, while the elements of agency and empowerment are completely missing. Refugees may be invited to participate in high-level events and meetings, but they are not informed afterwards of what will happen next or what has been done with their contributions. Nor are advice and recommendations from refugee leaders given due recognition in terms of financial compensation and/or formal acknowledgement. All this needs to change.

As part of ongoing efforts to conceptualize what meaningful refugee participation should look like, there is a need to push harder towards a fundamental change in the international system of refugee policy making to ensure the systematic and comprehensive inclusion of refugees. There are also critical problem areas related to the conceptualization of meaningful refugee participation.

In achieving the long-term objective of meaningful refugee participation, it may be useful to adopt a framework of transformative participation, as proposed by the infinity model of participation described earlier. As a struggle aimed at challenging prevailing omissions and underlying structural problems, this needs to be guided by a conviction that, to be successful, activism and advocacy work should be led by those who are

most affected, and they need to be empowered by the most potent tools of social change.

In conclusion, this paper proposes the following targeted and actionable recommendations that the authors consider essential for improving practice on refugee governance, all the way up to the global level. This builds not only on insights drawn from the research data collected between June and December 2021, but also on the previous work done by the GRN. The recommendations, presented in five inter-related sets, cover all actors involved in refugee response.

4.1. MULTILATERAL PROCESSES AND AGENCIES

Refugees need to have sustained access to decision-making processes on matters that affect their lives at local, national, regional and global levels; the latter at present is the most inaccessible for refugees. The commitments contained in recent international consensus documents, primarily the much celebrated GCR, need to be supplemented by concrete actions that reinforce the urgent need to revise the normative framework for refugee representation in decision-making processes at the global level. One of the most important steps in this direction would be to empower and institutionalize RLOs, such as the GRN, to ensure that there is a structure in place that reflects the interests of refugees at critical levels of decision-making processes. For this to happen, levels of refugee representation at major events need to be substantially increased, particularly at the biennial and quadrennial events of the GCR (the HLOM and GRF respectively). It is also imperative to explore all possible avenues to ensure representation of the GRN at the ExCom of UNHCR. As an umbrella organization of over 300 RLOs from around the world, the GRN has the greatest moral weight to advocate for this to happen. Equally important is the need to ensure a 25% participation rate by refugees and RLOs in the next meeting of the GRF in 2023.

4.2. DONORS AND FUNDING AGENCIES

None of the objectives articulated in this paper can be meaningfully achieved without financial resources, which are desperately needed by refugee advocates and RLOs to sustain their programmes and activities. Tangible improvement in the lives of refugees and host communities will be better achieved by a more effective, sustainable and just international refugee system, with politically empowered, meaningfully represented and financially strengthened refugee advocates and RLOs at its heart. Donors and funding agencies need to allocate the resources that are needed to facilitate new ways of working in refugee governance, with a particular focus on the agency and empowerment of refugee advocates and RLOs.

4.3. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NGOS

Organizations working in the field of forced displacement need to engage in some deep soul-searching to ensure diversity in their staffing and programming that guarantees the meaningful inclusion of forcibly displaced

persons (in terms of age, gender and diversity). There is also a critical need to provide refugees with technical and capacity-building support (in a non-patronizing way) to help them take charge of matters that have a bearing on their lives.

4.4. THE RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Researchers and academic institutions involved in the production of knowledge about forced displacement need to reflect on the imperative to enhance the contribution of 'situated knowledge' (standpoint epistemology) and the lived experience of refugees in shaping such processes. The logic is simple and clear: knowledge about forced displacement must be produced primarily from the standpoint of the most affected people and by those people themselves.

4.5. REFUGEE ADVOCATES AND RLOS

There is also a need for refugee advocates and RLOs to redouble their efforts. While the roles of other actors and partners cannot be underestimated, ultimately the required level of change articulated in this paper must be spearheaded and galvanized by the proactive involvement of refugee advocates and RLOs. The GRN in particular, building on its proven achievements since its inception in 2018, needs to strive continuously to identify and implement programmes and activities that are aligned with its guiding motto of 'Nothing about us without us'.

NOTES

1 United Nations. (2018). Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: Global Compact on Refugees, A/73/12 (Part II). <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/5b3295167.pdf> (as affirmed by a resolution of the UN General Assembly on 17 December 2018, A/RES/73/151). For all GCR-related processes and outcome documents, including the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), see in general UNHCR. Digital Platform for the Global Compact on Refugees. <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/>; and UNHCR. Digital Platform of the GRF. <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/global-refugee-forum>

2 See also United Nations General Assembly. (2016). New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, A/RES/71/1. https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_71_1.pdf; UNHCR. (2008). UNHCR Manual on a Community Based Approach in UNHCR Operations. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/47da54722.html>; UNHCR. (2020). Accountability to Affected People (AAP). <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/42554/accountability-to-affected-populations-aap>; and UNHCR. (2019). Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/4e7757449/unhcr-age-gender-and-diversity-policy.html>

3 Global Refugee-led Network (GRN). (2019). Meaningful Refugee Participation as Transformative Leadership: Guidelines for Concrete Action, p.7. https://www.asylumaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Meaningful-Refugee-Participation-Guidelines_Web.pdf

4 See Oxfam. (2019). Welcome, Support, Pledge, Resettle: Responsibility Sharing in the Global Compact on Refugees, p.12. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/welcome-support-pledge-resettle-responsibility-sharing-in-the-global-compact-on-620923/>

5 See the Digital Platform of the GRF. <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/global-refugee-forum>. See also GRN. (2018). Global Summit of Refugees: Policy Discussion and Outcomes Paper, p.1, p.5. http://www.networkforrefugeevoices.org/uploads/1/0/9/9/109923753/gsor_outcomes_and_policy_paper_final.pdf; and T. Harley and H. Hobbs. (2020). The Meaningful Participation of Refugees in Decision-Making Processes: Questions of Law and Policy. *International Journal of Refugee Law* 32(2), pp.200-226. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeaa010>

6 M. O'Neil, P.A. Woods and M. Webster. (2005). New Arrivals: Participatory Action Research, Imagined Communities, and "Visions" of Social Justice. *Social Justice* 31(1), pp.75-88. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29768292>. See also M.C. Sendall et al. (2018). Participatory Action Research, Mixed Methods, and Research Teams: Learning from Philosophically Juxtaposed Methodologies for Optimal Research Outcomes. *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 18, pp.1-6, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0636-1>; and C. Lenette. (2022, forthcoming). *Participatory Action Research: Ethics and Decolonisation*. Oxford University Press.

7 This project is a cross-border virtual space of solidarity, designed by NWC in the context of COVID-19, with the aim of providing support to a diverse group of migrants and refugee women throughout the world. Facilitated in different languages (English, Arabic, Spanish, Urdu, Pashto, Dari, etc.), it enables

participants to inform, connect and amplify their voices. It also aims to compile information on coping strategies, resilience and the needs of refugees and migrant women through self-representation.

8 A full record of the side event on Meaningful Refugee Participation is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlAlsbyeJ3E>. The event featured Najeezba Wazefadost of the GRN as moderator and Shaza Alrihawi of the GRN (co-author of this paper) as one of the main speakers.

9 The GRN outcome document, titled *Power and Margins: The State of Refugee Participation*, will be published on the GRN website (2022, forthcoming). See also UNHCHR (2021). GRN Statement Delivered at the High-Level Officials Meeting. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/events/conferences/61ba23054/statement-global-refugee-led-network-grn.html>

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