

MAKING THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR REFUGEES A REALITY: SAVING LIVES, SUPPORTING INCLUSION AND ADDRESSING CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT RISKS

Every four years, the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) provides a window of opportunity to advance the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and drive meaningful change for refugees and other displaced people¹. Drawing on the experience of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies ('National Societies') as key stakeholders in implementing the GCR², this brief highlights areas of acute need for refugees and other displaced people, showcases some of the creative solutions being implemented by National Societies, and sets out key recommendations for policy makers ahead of the GRF.

Introduction

Across the world, refugees and other displaced people continue to require lifesaving and essential humanitarian support, as well as longer term support for inclusion and self-sufficiency. Globally, 115 National Societies are supporting refugees and asylum seekers in emergency operations as well as through longer-term programming. As situations of displacement are increasingly compounded by climate change, conflict, and disease outbreaks such as COVID-19, the needs of refugees and other displaced people are becoming increasingly urgent and complex.

The Global Refugee Forum (GRF) is an opportunity to address these and other challenges for refugees and displaced people. It is a moment for the international community to take stock of the progress that has been made, share best practices, reflect on the pressing needs that remain, and recommit to forging durable solutions in a collective spirit of solidarity.

Informed by the experience of our global network of National Societies, the IFRC has three calls to action.

Calls to action



1. Don't forget the basics: **save lives** and **ensure access to essential services**



2. Act now to reduce climate related displacement and minimize the impacts of the **climate crisis** on refugees and other displaced people



3. Support the **socioeconomic inclusion** of refugees and other displaced people

¹ Throughout this brief, reference is made to 'refugees and other displaced people'. This more expansive term acknowledges the complexity of factors that lead to displacement and includes both refugees and people in refugee-like situations (i.e., people who have crossed international borders in search of protection but who may not fit the definition of a refugee under the 1951 Convention).

² Global Compact on Refugees, para 3.

Strategic Approaches

These three calls to action should be complemented by support for two strategic approaches which enable more efficient, effective, and relevant support for refugees and other displaced people.



1. Strengthen capacity, recognition, and support for **the leadership of local actors** in meeting the needs of refugees and other displaced people



2. Promote the **meaningful participation and engagement** of refugees and other displaced people in decision-making processes

The IFRC approach to migration and displacement

Addressing the needs of migrants and displaced communities, including refugees and asylum seekers is a global strategic priority for the IFRC Network. The IFRC approaches migration and displacement from a purely humanitarian perspective, focused on specific needs and potential, rather than status or category. The IFRC Network of 191 National Societies, permanently present in countries of origin, transit and destination, and auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, will continue to work in times of emergency and through longer term programming to scale up our assistance, protection and humanitarian diplomacy with and for refugees and other displaced people across the world.

For more information, see our [website](#).



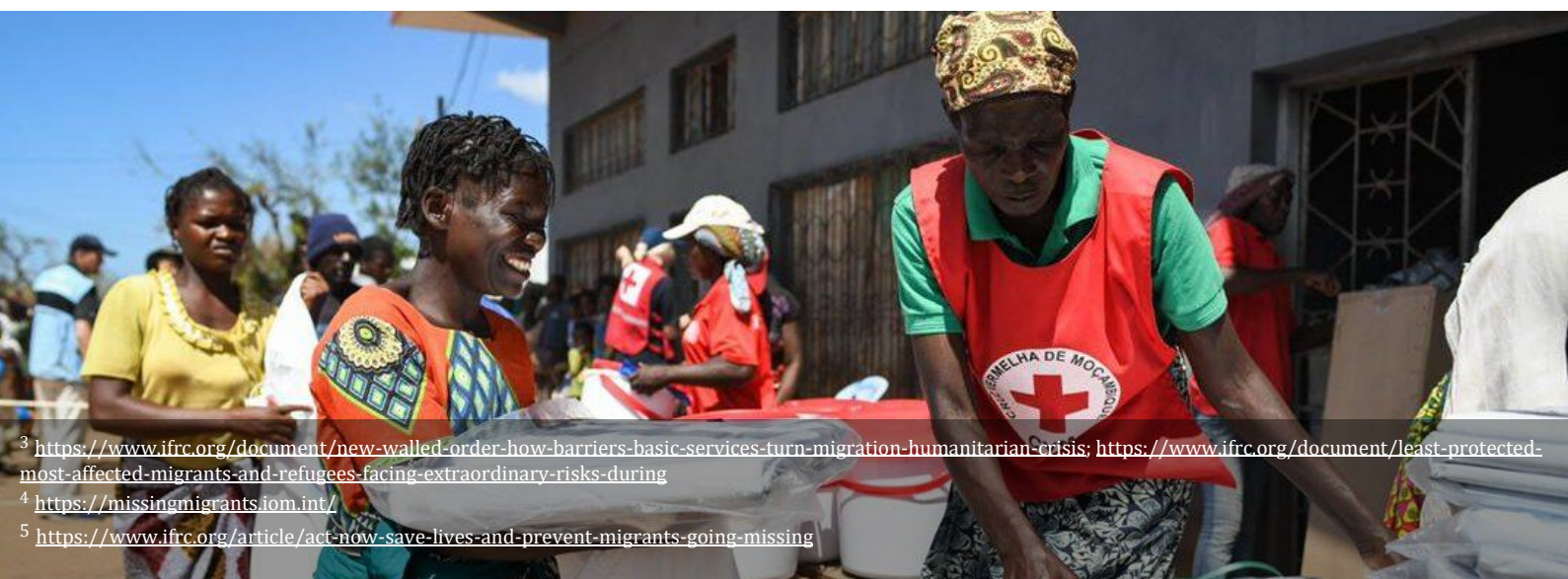
Our Calls to Action



1. Don't Forget the Basics: Save Lives and Ensure Access to Essential Services

Refugees and other displaced people face unacceptable risks to their safety and dignity, whether in transit along land or sea-based migration routes, at borders, or in host countries.³ Since 2014, more than 59,000 people have died along land and sea-based migration routes.⁴ Upon reaching borders, refugees and other displaced people are too often turned away without due consideration of their protection claims or detained and separated from their families. After arrival in host countries, refugees and other displaced people must frequently contend with discriminatory and restrictive laws and policies, creating formal and informal barriers to accessing essential services like healthcare, shelter, food, clean drinking water, legal advice, and education.

The imperative to save lives and preserve dignity is firmly rooted in the GCR⁶ and the international refugee legal framework. Implementation of the GCR should start from a baseline of demonstrating adherence to these regimes, ensuring that refugees, displaced people, and the communities that host them, are able to live safely, in dignity and peace, with the ability to meet their essential needs.



³ <https://www.ifrc.org/document/new-walled-order-how-barriers-basic-services-turn-migration-humanitarian-crisis>; <https://www.ifrc.org/document/least-protected-most-affected-migrants-and-refugees-facing-extraordinary-risks-during>

⁴ <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>

⁵ <https://www.ifrc.org/article/act-now-save-lives-and-prevent-migrants-going-missing>

How we support

IFRC and National Societies provide essential humanitarian and life-saving services to refugees and other displaced people around the world. Our specific work along migration and displacement routes is embodied in the [Global Route Based Migration Programme](#), which combines the reach of 57 National Societies working to save lives and improve the safety and dignity of all people on the move, including refugees. [Humanitarian Service Points](#) (HSPs) – operated by National Societies – provide safe and welcoming spaces for people on the move to access essential services, irrespective of their legal status. We operate more than 600 HSPs around the world, including the HSP at Sea in partnership with SOS Méditerranée on board the Ocean Viking, a vessel conducting search and rescue operations on the Central Mediterranean.

Recommendations

IFRC calls on States and other relevant stakeholders to:

- Make saving lives a top priority, including by ensuring that policies and laws do not put refugees' or other displaced people's lives at risk and that life saving humanitarian activities are never criminalized;
- Establish clear, coordinated, and properly resourced systems for search and rescue, including safe and predictable disembarkation mechanisms for people rescued at sea;
- Support route-based approaches to assistance and protection, including through the [Global Route Based Migration Programme](#);
- Protect refugees and other displaced people's right to family unity, including through protection from family separation at borders and issuance of family reunification visas, and commit to concrete action through the [Supporting Refugee Family Reunification](#) pledge;
- Ensure that national laws and policies support refugees and other displaced people's effective access to essential services, including food, shelter, health care, legal advice, psychosocial support, and information about relevant rights, entitlements, and processes.

2. Act now to reduce climate related displacement and minimize the impacts of the climate crisis on refugees and other displaced people

As climate change increases the intensity and frequency of weather-related hazards the number of people forced to leave their homes and communities will only increase.⁷ The international community can and must act now to address the humanitarian impacts of climate change, both as a driver of displacement and as a multiplier of vulnerabilities for refugees and other displaced people. To that end, we need to:

- Identify communities most at risk from displacement and invest in their climate smart risk reduction, resilience and adaptation to the effects of the climate crisis.
- Ensure that those who have been displaced have access to life-saving assistance and protection, irrespective of their status.
- Ensure that local communities and actors are at the centre of our collective action to address the risks of climate related displacement.

⁷ <https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/2021-Climate-Displacement-Report-Final.pdf>

How we support

Around the world, National Societies are protecting and assisting communities affected by climate displacement, as shown in the report, [Displacement in a Changing Climate](#). This includes integrating refugees and other displaced people into our climate smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation programming, through the [Global Climate Resilience Platform](#). It also includes scaling up early warning systems and anticipatory action through Early Action Protocols and the [IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Funds \(DREF\)](#).

At the strategic level, IFRC has founded the [Climate Charter](#) for humanitarian organizations and is developing a new climate and displacement strategic framework that connects and builds on existing initiatives and serves as a launching pad for ambitious new action to:

1. Reduce the risks of initial and multiple displacements
2. Ensure displaced people receive the humanitarian support they need
3. Promote durable solutions

Recommendations

IFRC calls on States and other relevant stakeholders to:

- Scale up action to avert, minimize and address climate-related displacement, including through concrete commitments under the [Climate Action and Finance Pledge](#);
- Implement the recommendations made by the [UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement](#);
- Promote action before communities are displaced – including early warning, early action and climate change adaptation;
- Integrate climate-related displacement into national laws, policies and strategies, including disaster law, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans;
- Mobilize flexible and accessible climate finance for local actors to reduce the humanitarian impacts of climate related displacement in climate-vulnerable countries; ensure that climate finance is integrated with humanitarian, disaster risk reduction and development finance;

3. Support the Socioeconomic Inclusion and Empowerment of Refugees and Other Displaced People

To achieve the GCR's key objective of enhancing refugee self-reliance, refugees and other displaced people must be fully included in host societies and be able to contribute to the social and economic lives of their new communities. Too many displaced people remain trapped in situations of uncertainty – unable to work and practice a profession, to further their education, to plan for the future. Often, this exclusion is the result of restrictive laws and policies. At other times, informal barriers like language, bureaucracy, and lack of social support structures lead to exclusion. When refugees and other displaced people are part of inclusive societies and are given the agency and support required to realize their ambitions, it enhances both their own lives and the social cohesion of the host communities.

How we support

National Societies play a key role in supporting the resilience, self-reliance and agency of refugees and other displaced people to become settled, included, and integrated into their new homes and societies. This support takes many forms and can include help with entering the job market (trainings, job applications, recognition of qualifications), orientation to help adjust to the new community (language courses, information hotlines, mentorship) and social cohesion initiatives to foster mutual understanding and build or strengthen relationships.

Recommendations

IFRC calls on States and other relevant stakeholders to:

- Include refugees and other displaced people in national systems, including access to social protection
- Increase investment in programmes and organizations that provide language training, mental health and psychosocial support, mentorship and youth engagement
- Increase investment in socioeconomic inclusion programmes aimed at improving social cohesion between refugee and host communities, fostering respect, intercultural awareness, and addressing discrimination;
- Support refugee employment, for example as part of the [WEF Refugee Employment Alliance](#).



Our Strategic Approaches



1. Strengthen Capacity, Recognition, and Support for the Leadership of Local Actors in Meeting the Needs of Refugees and Other Displaced People

The GCR puts forward a vision which includes local humanitarian actors as central players,⁸ noting that local actors “are often first responders to large-scale refugee situations, and among the actors that experience the most significant impact over the medium term.”⁹ Local actors, including National Societies and refugee-led organizations, have valuable technical and contextual knowledge – of language, culture, the environment – that enable them to provide assistance that is uniquely efficient, effective, and relevant. Stakeholders should make the most of these unique capabilities and help realize the GCR’s vision of putting local actors at the centre, by creating meaningful space for the engagement and leadership of local actors in refugee responses. This includes involving local actors in strategic discussions and coordination mechanisms, enhancing two-way capacity sharing, increasing the quality and proportion of funding flowing to local actors, and promoting more equitable partnerships overall.

How we support

Locally led action has been at the core of the IFRC’s working model since we were created in 1919. National Societies with local branches help each other to be as effective as possible and stand with each other in the face of overwhelming crises—all supported by the IFRC Secretariat. Around the world, IFRC and National Societies will continue to support local capacities, staff and volunteers as key local actors, and to promote wider policy change in support of all local humanitarian actors, including those that are refugee or community-led.

⁸ GCR paras 3, 37, 64, 66, 99, CRRF paras 7(d)

⁹ GCR Para 37

Recommendations

IFRC calls on States and other relevant stakeholders to:

- Make concrete commitments to support the role of local actors through the pledge on [Advancing Localization in Refugee and Statelessness Responses](#);
- Ensure that local actors, including National Societies and refugee led organizations, are adequately supported to engage in all mechanisms linked to implementation of the GCR, including the Global Refugee Forum;
- Promote and strengthen the capacity of local actors to deliver relevant assistance and services to refugees and other displaced people, including through investment in institutional capacity strengthening, shared decision-making, increased direct funding, and equitable partnerships, in line with commitments under the Grand Bargain;
- Increase both the quantity and quality of funding to local actors including National Societies and refugee led organizations.

2. Promote the Meaningful Participation and Engagement of Refugees and Other Displaced People in Decision-Making Processes

Refugees and other displaced people must have the opportunity to participate and engage meaningfully in decision-making processes. This is a critical way for refugees to have influence and agency over their lives and enhance their self-reliance – one of the four key objectives of the GCR.¹⁰ Furthermore, the skills, knowledge, expertise and lived experience that refugees and other displaced people can contribute are indispensable to creating more effective, relevant, and accountable programmes and policies. Refugees need to contribute at all stages of decision making, from planning, to implementation, to evaluation, and at all levels, from global, to regional, to national, to local.



¹⁰GCR paras 13, 77, 106, CRRF paras 7(c), 12(e)

How we support

Meaningful participation is an essential approach for all stakeholders and a journey of continuous growth, reflection, and improvement taken in tandem with refugees and other displaced people. As IFRC, we are committed to forging ahead in a spirit of humility and collaboration.

In efforts to ensure that our work with refugees and other displaced people is informed by the realities they face and enhanced by their knowledge, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement established a Lived Experience Advisory Committee to guide the development of a new global strategy on migration. The committee is composed of Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers who have lived experience of migration in situations of vulnerability, including as refugees, and who also have expertise as practitioners within the Movement.

Recommendations

IFRC calls on States and other relevant stakeholders to:

- Make concrete commitments to strengthen a diverse range of refugee voices and representation through the [Refugee Participation Pledge](#);
- Support [six key steps](#) for fostering meaningful participation at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, as highlighted by the Global Refugee-led Network;
- Engage refugees and refugee-led organizations in decision making processes at the global level, including the GCR and GRF processes, as well as the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP), UNHCR ExCom, and others. This includes formally requesting refugees from diverse backgrounds as members of delegations and as technical experts, advisors and key speakers;
- Enable refugees and refugee-led organizations to participate meaningfully in decision making processes, by providing full and timely information and supporting with administrative procedures related to traveling and attending meetings;
- Ensure processes for engaging refugees as advisors are fair, transparent, and representative of the diversity within refugee communities, paying attention to factors like age, gender, and diversity, and encouraging voices from vulnerable groups and contexts that are often overlooked;
- Include refugees in local and national coordination mechanisms, policy making and planning processes.



Case Studies

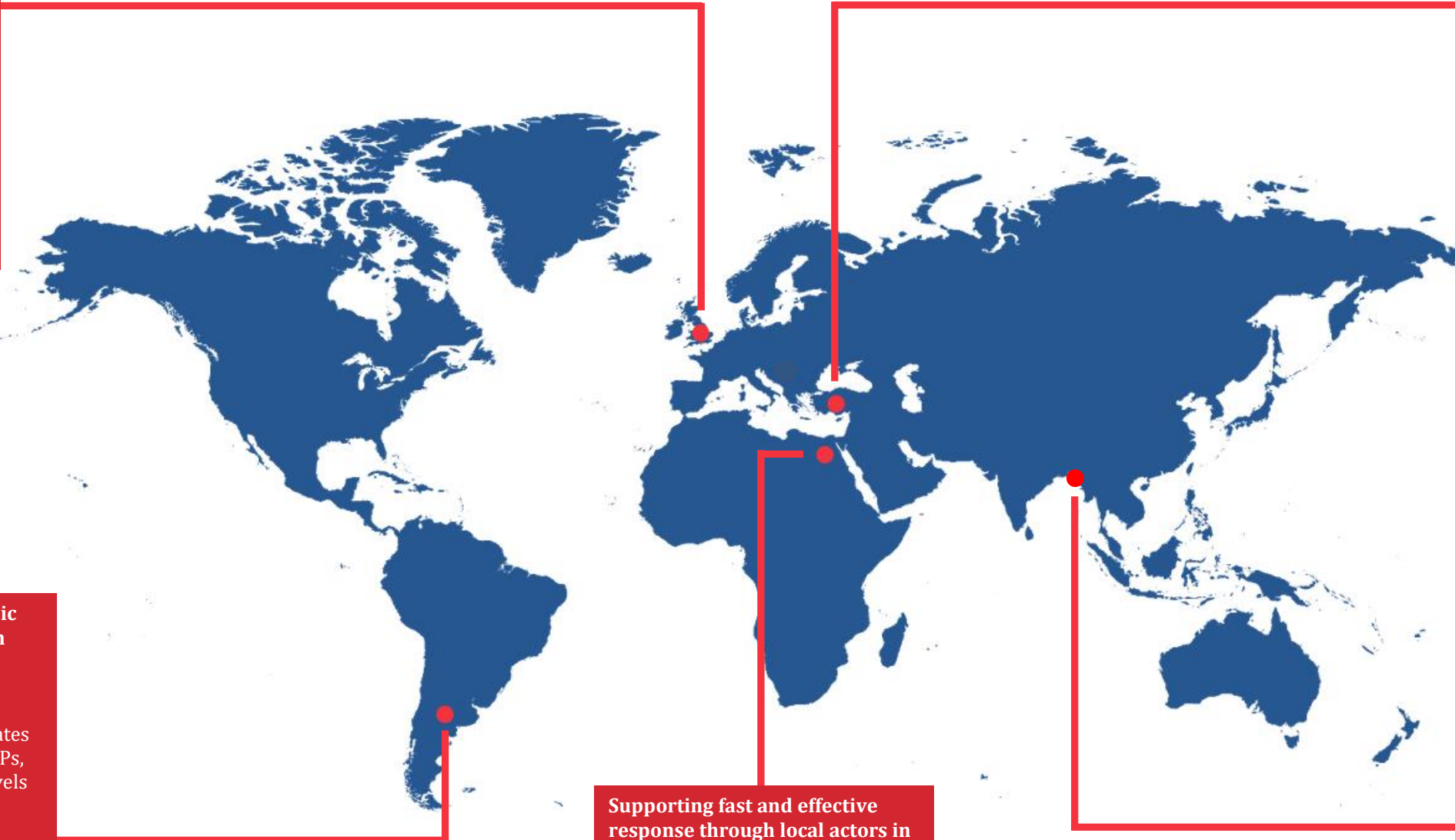
How National Societies are implementing our calls to action and strategic approaches

Supporting meaningful participation through the VOICES Network in the UK

The VOICES network, supported by the British Red Cross, is a collective of refugees and people seeking asylum who share insights and advocate on government legislation. Their expertise informs the British Red Cross' strategies and programming with refugees. The VOICES network has been effective in influencing Members of the UK Parliament and at global events like the ATRC and Global Refugee Forum.

Fostering the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees in Turkey

Since 2015, the Turkish Red Crescent's (Turk Kizilay) Community Based Migration Programme has assisted over 1.9M refugees on their journey to self-reliance and socioeconomic inclusion. This has included supporting refugees with language courses; with vocational training; with work placement programmes; and with information and assistance on complex administrative procedures.



Saving lives and meeting basic needs through Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs) in Argentina

The Argentine Red Cross operates seven fixed and two mobile HSPs, including one in a van that travels along the Argentine-Bolivian border. The van is equipped to function as a first aid station and connectivity point and includes specialized medical equipment. The van also distributes food rations, water and hygiene kits and provides healthcare services.

Supporting fast and effective response through local actors in Egypt

When conflict broke out in Sudan on April 15, 2023, the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) responded to support those fleeing the violence. Staff and volunteers were mobilized, emergency funding was allocated from the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and HSPs were quickly established at border crossings. This local presence, and the strong relationship between ERC and its government, allowed them rapid access to key border areas, long before international actors could establish operations.

Integrating refugees in disaster risk reduction in Bangladesh

As part of the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP), the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) has been including Rohingya refugees in disaster risk reduction efforts as Camp Volunteers. The language and cultural mediation skills that these volunteers bring have been instrumental in strengthening capacities to prepare and response to disasters among the Rohingya population.