



**A Trans-Border Manifesto:
Five Pillars of Three-Year Change**
Global Refugee-Led Network

We all share humanity; we all share responsibility.

We are refugees and forcibly displaced people who have been meeting in regional and global summits since 2018. This Manifesto presents the core calls for policy action that have come out these meetings.

We have united because we want to see change. All across the globe, we see symptoms of a broken system. More and more people are forced to leave their homes due to conflict, persecution, violence, state failure, climate change and environmental degradation. The numbers are unprecedented, yet the political response and needed international cooperation is slow and blatantly insufficient. Without an effective response, lives are at risk every day. This inaction also feeds discrimination and xenophobic sentiments.

We have come together as migrants and refugees, and as activists, advocates and community organisers. While our individual stories are different, the challenges we face - and the solutions we encounter are surprisingly similar. It is from this shared experience that we speak with a united voice.

This Manifesto present our three-year, five-pillar agenda for **policy action**. We envision a future in which refugees, and host communities not only share the responsibility to help each other, but also share the opportunity to enjoy the benefits that come from this cooperation. **We know, from experience, that when we can move safely and our rights are respected, humanity wins.** This is an agenda for everyone.

Pillar 1: Participation

We have a voice, we have agency. Let's change the system together.

Pillar 2: Protection

Saving our lives is the top priority and it is consistent with effective management of borders.

Pillar 3: Pathways

Human beings will always be on the move; how we move depends on you.

Pillar 4: Work

Access to decent work is the key for our empowerment and inclusion.

Pillar 5: Integration and Inclusion

Integration is inclusion: it takes equal partners to shape the community we live in together.

FIVE PILLARS FOR CHANGE

Pillar 1: Participation

We have a voice, we have agency. Let's change the system together.

As representatives of affected populations, advocates and service providers, we are political actors, capable, willing and already contributing to the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies. We therefore must be involved in policy making at all levels.

Policy actions:

1. Make sure we have a seat at every table where policies that concern us are being designed, executed and evaluated.
2. Actively address key barriers to our participation in decision-making processes, including those linked to resources, advocacy and leadership skills and administrative barriers linked to documents, travel visas and permits.
3. Facilitate and fund the creation of inclusive self-organized international and national platforms for migrant and refugee participation.
4. Guarantee political and civil rights of affected populations, in particular in humanitarian responses. This gives us agency and avoids our prolonged dependency on international assistance.
5. Join our pledge¹ for refugee inclusion!

Pillar 2: Protection

Saving our lives is the top priority and it is consistent with effective management of borders.

Today we are in distress at borders and in transit all across the globe and it is those of us who are most vulnerable who are most affected. We are denied access to basic services and to the right to seek international protection and too often we are criminalized or collectively expelled. While all governments have the sovereign right to manage those who enter, stay and leave their territories, border management policies always have to be in line with the principles of international law.

Policy actions:

1. **Immediately end** border policies that jeopardise the safety and dignity of migrants and that hamper their access to international protection; these harmful policies include encampment, arbitrary expulsions and abuse by border officials.
2. Make **saving lives** an absolute priority.
3. Stop the detention of children, and their separation from their parents **now**. Detention of migrants can only be used as a last resort and for the shortest time possible: community-based alternatives exist, work and are more cost-effective.
4. Ensure effective identification and human rights protection of unaccompanied children, women and girls, LGBTI, indigenous people and those with disabilities. They are at heightened risk of violence and abuse, in particular in mixed migration flows.

¹ **Refugee Participation Pledge:** My government/institution/organisation/company/me individually, etc. pledge(s) to meaningfully engage refugees themselves in all processes and decisions which affect them, and pledge(s) that the meaningful engagement of refugees will underpin and strengthen every contribution or pledge my government/institution/organisation/company/I, etc. will bring to or announce at the first Global Refugee Forum, to be held on 17 and 18 December 2019 in Geneva. My government/institution/organisation/company/ me individually, etc. furthermore pledge(s) to share experiences on the implementation of this pledge at subsequent Global Refugee Forums and/or high-level officials' meetings.

5. **Immediately end** the criminalisation of solidarity with us. It closes down an essential helpline and kills migrants and refugees in distress. It also threatens general support for solidarity in society and affects integration efforts.
6. We see a global trend to make returns ‘easier’. While we recognize returns as a durable solution, it must go hand in hand with the **availability of safe pathways** and must always respect the principle of non-refoulement. In addition, a return may only take place when certain political conditions in the country of return are met, such as safety, peace and compliance with basic human rights.

Pillar 3: Pathways

Humans will always be on the move. How we move depends on you.

Some governments restrict access to safe pathways as a deterrence tactic. In practice this policy does not work. Those who are forced to flee will do so regardless of the risks ahead. Without safe pathways and access to status however, we will face exploitation, abuse and harm by unscrupulous employers, border officials and networks of traffickers and smugglers.

Indirectly, these restrictive policies also create and sustain a market for criminal networks to thrive in.

Policy actions:

1. Urgently increase resettlement and complementary pathways, including family reunification, community and private sponsorship programmes, humanitarian visas and work and education visas. These should be based on clear and transparent criteria.
2. Share the responsibility fairly to ensure that all countries contribute according to their capacity, as you have committed in the Global Compact on Refugees.
3. Make sure decisions on status are made within the quickest time possible so we can plan our lives and futures and ensure access to longer-term solutions for stay and hereby enable us to not be considered refugees, irregular migrants or ‘people in need’ indefinitely.
4. Ease the way in which people can move between statuses, and make these steps transparent; this benefits migrants, employers and society.
5. Mobility should be a right. Can we put into place modalities, at a regional level and beyond, that allow refugees the ability to move to further their goals for self-reliance?

Pillar 4: Work

Access to decent work is the key for our empowerment and inclusion

Access to the formal job market of a receiving country is crucial for our participation and inclusion in society. It is also good for business. Our unique experience and background bring innovation and our businesses are important providers of employment. Access to the formal job market also protects us from exploitation and harm in the work place and allows us to contribute to the tax system.

Policy actions:

1. Grant work permits from the moment we arrive. We often wait a long time before we receive a decision about our status; let us work in the meantime.
2. Work with the private sector to better match our skills with the labour market.
3. Use labour mobility schemes as an additional pathway across all skill levels to respond to labour market needs in host countries.
4. Invest in skill recognition across all skill levels so that we can practice what we are best at.
5. Invest in vocational trainings and facilitate our access to all levels of education.

Pillar 5: Integration is Inclusion

It takes equal partners to shape the community we live in together

The term ‘integration’ has many interpretations. For us, integration means being included as a full member of society. Effective integration policies therefore create the conditions for this to happen and do not put the onus of integration on migrants and refugees only.

Policy actions:

1. Ensure access to basic services for everyone, including access to education. Rather than develop different sets of services depending on someone’s status, you should address existing barriers to access them. This is also the most efficient way of protecting the wellbeing of all people.
2. Increase our political participation by extending voting rights after a given period of stay and allow for groups to organise collectively.
3. Make language courses easily available and as soon as possible after entry.
4. Work with us, with the media and schools to spread our voice and stories and amplify the work of community and grass roots initiatives that assist us. Aside from the vital services they provide, they strengthen existing goodwill in host communities that must be harnessed.
5. Take strong action against racial profiling, discrimination, and acts of racism and exploitation. They are always harmful for society as a whole.

Annex: **Overlap Between the Trans-Border Manifesto and the Global Compact on Refugees**

Pillar 1: Participation

We have a voice, we have agency. Let's change the system together.

Refugee self-representation:

Paragraph 106: “States and relevant stakeholders **will facilitate meaningful participation of refugees**, including women, persons with disabilities, and youth, in Global Refugee Forums, ensuring the inclusion of their perspectives on progress. A digital platform developed by UNHCR and accessible to all will enable the sharing of good practices, notably from an age, gender, disability, and diversity perspective, in the application of the different elements of the global compact.”

Paragraph 7: “The objectives of the global compact as a whole are to: (i) ease pressures on host countries; (ii) **enhance refugee self-reliance**; (iii) expand access to third country solutions; and (iv) support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity...”

Pillar 2: Protection

Saving our lives is the top priority and it is consistent with effective management of borders.

Human rights:

Paragraph 9: “... All States and relevant stakeholders are called on to tackle the root causes of large refugee situations, including through heightened international efforts to prevent and resolve conflict; to uphold the Charter of the United Nations, international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as the rule of law at the national and international levels; to promote, respect, protect and fulfil **human rights** and fundamental freedoms for all...”

Protection of children:

Paragraph 60: “In support of concerned countries, States and relevant stakeholders will contribute resources and expertise for the establishment of mechanisms for identification, screening and referral of those with specific needs to appropriate and accessible processes and procedures. Multi-stakeholder response teams could be established to facilitate this operationally. **This will include the identification and referral of children, including unaccompanied and separated children, to best interests’ assessment and/or determination, together with appropriate care arrangements or other services...**”

For more on a commitment to children protection, see also paragraphs 76 (which addresses children as vulnerable group) and 59 (which mentions protection of separated children).

Pillar 3: Pathways

Humans will always be on the move. How we move depends on you.

Protection against trafficking:

Paragraph 57 (on safety and security) “At the request of concerned States, and in full respect of national laws and policies, UNHCR and relevant stakeholders will contribute resources and expertise to support protection-sensitive arrangements for timely security screening and health assessments of new arrivals. Support will also be provided for: capacity development of relevant authorities, for instance on international refugee protection and exclusion criteria; strengthening of international efforts to prevent and combat sexual and gender-based violence, **as well as trafficking and smuggling in persons...**”

Pledge to responsibility-sharing:

Paragraph 3: “Against this background, the global compact on refugees intends to provide a basis for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing among all United Nations Member States, together with other relevant stakeholders as appropriate...”

Non-refoulement:

Paragraph 5: The global compact emanates from fundamental principles of humanity and international solidarity, and seeks to operationalize the principles of burden and responsibility-sharing to better protect and assist refugees and support host countries and communities. The global compact is entirely non-political in nature, including in its implementation, and is in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. **It is grounded in the international refugee protection regime, centred on the cardinal principle of non-refoulement**, and at the core of which is the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

Paragraph 87: Voluntary repatriation in conditions of safety and dignity remains the preferred solution in the majority of refugee situations. The overriding priorities are to promote the enabling conditions for voluntary repatriation in full respect for **the principle of non-refoulement**, to ensure the exercise of a free and informed choice³⁸ and to mobilize support to underpin safe and dignified repatriation.

Multiple pathways:

Paragraph 85: “This includes the three traditional durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration, as well as other local solutions and complementary pathways for admission to third countries, which may provide additional opportunities...”

Paragraph 86: “offers of resettlement and complementary pathways will be an indispensable part of the arrangements set out in Part A”.

As well as paragraphs 90-99 on Resettlement, Complementary pathways for admission to third countries, and local integration.

Pillar 4: Work

Access to decent work is the key for our empowerment and inclusion

Jobs:

Paragraph 70: “...States and relevant stakeholders will contribute resources and expertise to **promote economic opportunities, decent work, job creation and entrepreneurship programmes for host community members and refugees**, including women, young adults, older persons and persons with disabilities.”

(Paragraph 71: “Depending on the context, resources and expertise could be contributed to support: labour market analysis to identify gaps and opportunities for employment creation and income generation; mapping and recognition of skills and qualifications among refugees and host communities; and strengthening of these skills and qualifications through specific training programmes, including language and vocational training, linked to market opportunities, in particular for women, persons with disabilities, and youth. Particular attention will be paid to closing the technology gap and building capacities (particularly of developing and least-developed refugee host countries), including to facilitate online livelihood opportunities. Efforts will be made to support access to affordable financial products and services for women and men in host and refugee communities, including by reducing associated risks and enabling low-cost mobile and internet access to these services where possible; as well as to support the transfer of remittances. In some contexts, where appropriate, preferential trade arrangements could be explored in line with relevant international obligations, especially for goods and sectors with high refugee

participation in the labour force; as could instruments to attract private sector and infrastructure investment and support the capacity of local businesses.”).

Pillar 5: Integration is Inclusion

It takes equal partners to shape the community we live in together

Political integration – naturalization

The GCR does not have anything on political representation of refugees and voting rights in their host communities. In fact, it highlights the sovereign states’ right to decide on these matters. However, paragraph 97 says:

“A number of States have found it useful to move towards the local integration of refugees, including by providing durable legal status and naturalization, where appropriate, without prejudice to the specific situation of certain middle income and developing countries facing large-scale refugee situations.”

Two-way process:

Paragraph 98: “**Local integration is a dynamic and two-way process**, which requires efforts by all parties, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society, and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population. In low- and middle-income countries, additional financial and technical support from the international community is required to ensure successful local integration in a manner that takes into account the needs of both refugees and host communities...”

Discrimination:

Paragraph 84: “Recognizing the importance of good relations between communities, pending the availability of durable solutions, programmes and projects will be designed in ways that **combat all forms of discrimination** and promote peaceful coexistence between refugee and host communities, in line with national policies....”;

Paragraph 9: “...to **promote, respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms for all; and to end exploitation and abuse, as well as discrimination of any kind on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability, age, or other status. ...**”