



70 YEARS

PROTECTING PEOPLE FORCED TO FLEE

Virtual Conference on the 70th Anniversary of the founding of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

18th-27th January 2021

CONFERENCE REPORT



University of Essex

Disclaimer: The information, views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the University of Essex or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Cover photo: Four refugee youth in a group discussion in Mexico. © UNHCR/Jeoffrey Guillemardt

Table of Content

Executive Summary and Analysis	4
Global	9
East and Horn of Africa	11
Southern Africa	13
Europe	14
Latin America	15
Asia Pacific	16
Middle East and North Africa	18
West and Central Africa	19
North America	21
Acknowledgments	23

Executive Summary and Analysis

Paragraph 43 of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) speaks to the establishment of a 'global academic network on refugee, other forced displacement, and statelessness issues...involving universities, academic alliances, and research institutions, together with UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders, to facilitate research, training and scholarship opportunities which result in specific deliverables in support of the objectives of the global compact'.

This network, the Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network (GAIN), hosted a virtual academic conference on the 70th anniversary of the UNHCR Statute titled '70 years protecting people forced to flee'. It was delivered in partnership with eleven academic institutions and networks from every region of UNHCR operations. The discourse included interdisciplinary analysis from both well-established experts and emerging scholars, a list of all contributing speakers is annexed to the end of this document. In several cases, as is noted in the session summaries, panels were contributing activities to 2019 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledges.

Reflecting the multi-stakeholder approach called for in the GCR, 30 of 80 panellists came from civil society, United Nations agencies and government. Nine of 20 panels included persons with first-hand experience of displacement, not to provide 'case studies' but as scholars analysing information and proposing solutions. Links to the original recordings and summary documents written by the session hosts are integrated throughout this document, reflecting the insights of the speakers in their own words.

While commemorating the UNHCR Statute, this conference also served as an academic stocktaking event in the lead up to the 2021 High Level Officials Meeting for the Global Refugee Forum. Analysis of key areas of consideration for the conference for the Global Refugee Forum stakeholder group was provided by Professor Geoff Gilbert, inaugural Chair of the GAIN Secretariat. They are as follows:

EXPANDING SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES AND HOST COUNTRIES

While the GCR is non-binding (Paragraph 4), it reflects the political will to better protect and assist refugees. GCR Paragraph 5 talks about seeking to operationalize burden- and responsibility-sharing for overarching improved protection objective and does so with copious references to internationally binding instruments. Simply referring to binding instruments cannot impose legal obligations in the face of the explicit language of Paragraph 4, but what Paragraph 5 does is to reveal to the international community as a whole, which includes GAIN, how to understand the guiding principles and objectives of the GCR with respect to protection and solutions for displaced populations. This takes us back to the theme of this virtual conference, the Statute of UNHCR, paragraph 1:

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, acting under the authority of the General Assembly, shall assume the function of providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments and, subject to the approval of the Governments concerned, private organizations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities.

Several panels picked up on rights in treaties and under customary international law, the obligations of parties to conflicts to ensure fundamental principles such as distinction and proportionality, but also to other standards essential to a holistic approach to protection, such as the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that demand that no-one, including displaced populations and stateless persons, is left behind (Paragraph 9, GCR).

What was clear is that the GCR is a natural and essential development of the original foundation for all UNHCR's work and that it brings together all the developments and policies since the 1950s that enhance protection and solutions, not only international treaties and customs, but regional instruments, soft law, Conclusions of the Executive Committee, Security Council Resolutions, especially 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and rule of law (GCR Paragraph 9). It also reflects UNHCR's unique mandate, but recognises that the international community--not just states and international organizations, but cities, faith groups and academia--are crucial contributors too. In that regard, the reference to rule of law at the international and national levels is a crucial component in this whole-of-society approach. One aspect of this approach that GAIN can develop is the understanding of refugee protection and solutions by bringing cutting-edge interdisciplinary scholarship to bear on current problems, something that is ever more essential with over 82 million persons of concern to UNHCR worldwide. Through research, insights can be provided into how to innovate on the application of core principles like *non-refoulement*, durable and sustainable solutions, humanitarian access and, possibly, most importantly, prevention and root causes (Paragraphs 8 and 9, GCR).

If protection and assistance for refugees is one of the guiding principles of the GCR, the other is burden- and responsibility-sharing. Given that 85 per cent of persons of concern to UNHCR are in low- or middle-income countries, the need for the international community as a whole to support countries of asylum is self-evident. The four objectives of the GCR in Paragraph 7 all speak to that same end:

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.

The international legal frameworks have fewer direct references to more predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, but the United Nations Charter and the 1951 Refugee Convention talk of international co-operation and Art.2(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights obliges each state party, individually and through

international assistance and co-operation to progressively achieve the full realization of the Covenant's rights. The panels, recognising the transformative change brought about by the GCR *vis-à-vis* protection and solutions as established in the Statute, all spoke to this ultimate form of protection broadly conceived, durable and sustainable solutions.

The four solutions in the GCR (Paragraphs 85-100) reflect the Paragraph 7 objectives. Starting with voluntary repatriation, there is a need to review how the United Nations can deliver as one through the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, and the Special Procedure Mandate Holders, as well as all its agencies in the humanitarian and development fields, so as to operationalise interoperability. Facilitating voluntary repatriation might require the establishment of a safe and peaceful environment in the country of nationality, somewhere where human rights and the rule of law are upheld, and where development actors can assist in rebuilding an inclusive society that supports a durable and sustainable solution for displaced persons. Achieving that may require co-operation with the country of asylum, as well, to ensure displaced populations can participate in the political affairs of the country of nationality as it transitions in preparation for their return. There is a range of research that is needed across all disciplines if this is to be successful and GAIN should be part of this.

As for resettlement, the international community of states needs to offer more resettlement places to 'ease pressures on host countries'. Additionally, refugee self-reliance means that many in receipt of some form of protection then seek their own solutions through labour mobility and education complementary pathways, clearly demonstrating the importance of the voice of those who are themselves displaced as part of resolving the global refugee protection crisis. The GRF pledges by academia for scholarships and fellowships are a step in support of these pathways.

Linked thereto, is improving the situation of most refugees while they are receiving protection in countries of asylum, including agendas that tackle discrimination and xenophobia. Inclusive protection is part of the continuum to solutions for refugees, enhancing their self-reliance, and productive involvement in the host community for the benefit of all.

The practice of warehousing or detaining displaced populations in remote settlements, away from hosts, markets, etc. is unsustainable when displacement lasts 20 years. It is a waste of talent and opportunity. Over 60 per cent of persons of concern to UNHCR now reside in urban environments, such that support to host communities is even more important, with UNHCR working alongside development actors. During the pandemic, the skills that refugees have brought to the host communities have shown an example of the benefits of inclusive protection. In this regard, even temporary complementary pathways, such as visas for graduate study, even where they do not lead to long-term resettlement opportunities, will have made the refugee better able to contribute to the country of asylum until a durable and sustainable solution is achieved.

Research needs to prioritize consideration of refugee self-reliance, and persons of concern need to be included in national policies and services in ways that ensure everyone (both host and displaced communities) benefit. If refugees and host communities are to benefit, though, there needs to be joined-up thinking that can rely on authoritative data. This is where household-level (micro) data, such as that from the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center, is critical, with interdisciplinary analysis (not just socio-economic) of such data so that there is a more holistic picture of what will be needed by the displaced populations, the host communities and the country of asylum.

In sum, as all the panels discussed, the concept of protection has expanded since 1950 and UNHCR's role has increased over time as UN Member States have called upon it to act. These include cases where there has been a very specific allocation of responsibility by the international community as a whole, such as for stateless people, who are often the most vulnerable of all, and conflict-driven Internally Displaced People (IDPs). However, as the GCR makes clear, UNHCR works not just with refugees, but with host communities, too, in terms of ensuring the needs of all are met, not simply in terms of shelter, but also as regards education and health-care services. UNHCR cannot take this on alone, a multi-stakeholder approach is critical to meeting the protection needs that have emerged over the last 70 years. In that regard, 1400 GRF pledges are an example of how we can start to proceed with that multi-stakeholder approach, of which GAIN is one part.

AREAS IN NEED OF FURTHER SUPPORT

The best form of protection from forced displacement is prevention, but as we cannot prevent all causes, we need to find solutions too. This includes more proactively addressing the intersectionality of conflict and climate induced displacement (Global, Latin America, Asia Pacific and North America sessions).

What was so interesting about this online symposium was how certain themes kept recurring across the different time zones: the effects of climate anomalies and their impact on displacement and conflict; access to education; and the need for regional and global responses by the international community as a whole. (Prof Geoff Gilbert, Professor of International Human Rights & Humanitarian Law, University of Essex)

The challenge of safe and dignified work was a common theme from the Asia Pacific panel (inadequacies of temporary seasonal work permits), the Middle East and North Africa (analysis on the Jordan Jobs Compact and the Gulf Cooperation Council Labour Migration Scheme), Southern Africa on Malawi, good practices from Mexico (significance of being able to work while waiting for asylum determination) and Uganda's generous inclusionary policies. However, the 2019 UNHCR Global Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Survey revealed 70 per cent of refugees lived in countries with restricted right to work; 47 per cent of refugees lived in countries with restricted access to bank accounts. Finally, many stateless persons worldwide are also excluded from bank accounts.

Further support is needed from GRF stakeholders to expand refugees' access to third country solutions in alignment with the Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways. The Strategy is a key vehicle to increase the number of resettlement spaces, expand the number of resettlement countries, improve the availability and predictability of complementary pathways for admission and promote welcoming and inclusive societies.

The launch of GAIN at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum in no way initiated UNHCR collaboration with academia. From its very establishment in the 1950s, UNHCR has drawn on the scholarship of universities to better protect persons of concern. What GAIN seeks to achieve, and what the virtual conference evidenced is threefold: first, that more disciplines engage with protection for refugees so that no issues are overlooked by a narrow focus on law and social science; next, that there is a truly global engagement with academia, not just one that turns to the well-resourced establishments in the Global North; and, finally, that those with first-hand experience of displacement are included in the conversations. Refugee hosting countries, the low- or middle-income countries that host 85 per cent of the persons of concern to UNHCR, need to no longer simply be 'case studies' for academics in research institutions and universities in the Global North. Their academics and displaced persons need to become partners in research. GAIN also promotes ethical approaches to data collection and research in line with the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration's Code of Ethics, particularly important given that persons of concern are in situations of vulnerability and may not have the autonomy to control participation. Furthermore, the research has to be published and disseminated in a form that is accessible, free and can itself be validated based on the data it has utilised. To that effect, the UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Centre's data sets are going to be fundamental. However, as the range of disciplines working on forced displacement grows, the sources of data and its variety will undoubtedly need to expand too. That will also mean that the complete experience of displacement is covered, not just those elements that reflect refugee status and *non-refoulement*. If there is to be a comprehensive approach to protection and solutions, then parallel concerns relating to people on the move will be more evident. UNHCR's mandate is broader than in 1950, encompassing stateless persons and conflict-driven IDPs, but it does not deal with all causes of movement except where there is an overlap of categories. Human trafficking and people smuggling are not matters within international refugee law except where the persons trafficked then need *non-refoulement* protection or where people smugglers were used as the only means to escape persecution or conflict that in their own right would justify refugee status. The links between disasters and displacement, or even how disasters can affect displaced populations, a matter considered in

more than one panel, mean that scholars with non-standard skills as far as the 1951 Convention is concerned will be central to GAIN's role under the GCR so that UNHCR would have a repository of specialist knowledge available is core to enhancing protection of refugees and host communities and achieving fairer and more predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing by the international community as a whole.

If people on the move is a concept more broadly conceived within GAIN's research remit, then protection equally is fuller. In this regard, though, UNHCR itself has led the way over the past 70 years as it reflects on the experiences of refugees in countries of asylum. Moreover, since more than 75 percent of persons of concern are in situations of protracted displacement, the need to understand protection as ongoing, as falling within humanitarian and development phases and to be part of a process leading to a durable and sustainable solution is essential. Registration and documentation are the gateway to protection over time, which includes access to education (primary, secondary and tertiary), employment and healthcare: greater respect for rights also helps facilitate voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity, but those aspects of voluntary repatriation still require deeper research, research that includes the voice of the displaced populations.

What was also clear from the panels was the multifaceted character of protection and its providers, not just States, but cities, faith groups, and host communities generally. Protracted protection requires resources and mandates that go beyond the role of UNHCR, which is why it is so critical to work with partners as it upholds its unique mandate to provide international protection. Nevertheless, one aspect of a more holistic approach to rights-based protection--as the panels highlighted and goes to the core of the GCR--is the inclusion of the voice of the displaced populations themselves, especially women and youth.

As previously stated, the GCR speaks to the need for prevention in Paragraphs 8 and 9, a topic that has, in fact, been researched for decades. Moreover, the 2015 High Commissioner's dialogue specifically looked at root causes, acknowledging that preventing flight is more effective than protracted protection. That said, prevention demands that UNHCR engages not just with development actors, but in the peace

and security debate with the Security Council and Secretary-General, indicating just how all-embracing the international community is 'as a whole'. While in-country work is foreseen in Paragraph 8b of the 1950 Statute and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee specifically gave UNHCR the mandate for conflict-driven IDPs in 2005, GAIN provides the capacity to engage in research on predictive analysis that explores the balancing act required between protection in-country and reducing the need for flight across an international border, as against the right to seek asylum where that would provide enhanced safety for persons of concern. Furthermore, while UNHCR has no mandate for those displaced by climate events or disaster, their intersection with conflict requires further research as access to land or water become matters of tension between communities and even states as well as where displaced populations are then affected by climate events during their displacement; then UNHCR's protection mandate extends to protection in context, promotion of resilience and the facilitation of adaptation.

It would have been strange at the start of 2021 if the panels had not addressed COVID-19 and its impact on displaced populations. The pandemic limited access to the territory of states in order to even seek asylum, effectively challenging fundamental principles such as *non-refoulement*. Even where access was possible, there had been an almost automatic use of extended detention that was often unsafe and with no recourse to refugee status determination, either indirectly because of lockdowns or because states failed to put in place adequate social distancing measures to allow it to proceed. In some cases, the lack of effective technology to allow remote processing meant leaving refugees in limbo. In some cases, though, the panels made clear that the international community had stepped in to

support states unable to put measures in place. The panels did evidence positive cases, too, that showed how GAIN research can disseminate good practice, for instance Portugal's waiver of the need for documentation in order to access health care. Moreover, if COVID-19 was generally bad for all refugees, children and other vulnerable groups suffered even more, something that will require increased efforts as things move forward. Furthermore, the previous emphasis on registration and documentation as gateways to continuing protection were amplified many times over during the pandemic. During COVID-19, access by displaced children to education has been severely limited. This will continue to have knock on effects throughout their education. When it is noted that only 3 per cent of displaced children ever have access to tertiary education, the consequences are evident. On the other hand, COVID-19 has reinforced the utility of distance and blended learning programmes to achieve access to tertiary education for displaced students.

Education goes everywhere with you, like a passport
(Mr Abdikadir Bare Abikar, 2020 Fellow at the British Institute in Eastern Africa)

In conclusion, the panels at the virtual conference highlighted the value of GAIN to UNHCR and revealed how the original 1950 mandate is still core to everything that the organisation does, but that equally how, as the mandate has expanded, academia has supported UNHCR in its activities and will continue to do so as the next phase of protection and solutions unfolds through the opportunities and frameworks that the GCR presents for the international community as a whole and especially, persons of concern to the High Commissioner.



Attendees listen to speeches at the Global Compact on Refugees meeting at the UN Headquarters in New York. © UNHCR/Andrew Kelly



[Session recording link](#)



[Session recording link](#)

Global

Hosted by UNHCR and the [GAIN Secretariat](#) through the University of Essex.

In 2020, UNHCR celebrated 70 years of providing international protection to refugees and of assisting governments in seeking permanent solutions for those forcibly displaced. The 1950 Statute saw the refugee phenomenon as an aberration that would be resolved in a reasonably short period. However, 70 years later there are now over 828 million persons of concern to UNHCR, 85 per cent of whom are hosted in low- or middle-income countries. The challenging environment of refugee protection as UNHCR enters its eighth decade has taken on yet another dimension with the affirmation in 2018 of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR),

which, while not legally binding, it is based on a strong commitment by States to enhance refugee protection and inclusion alongside fairer and more predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

The global panels were an introduction to the two days of regional discussions focused on key developments in protection and solutions since the 1950 Statute. The first considered how UNHCR's mandate has expanded and includes refugees, asylum-seekers, persons internally displaced and stateless persons. Reflection was also shared on the protracted nature of most contemporary conflicts, climate anomalies and environmental degradation that exacerbate the problems of forced displacement.

The inter-connectivity between refugee law, environmental law and international humanitarian law and the need to apply interdisciplinary and regional approaches were emphasized in this discussion as were the needs to address root causes. The discussants also reflected the importance today that people with lived experiences play a key role throughout the process and help create effective solutions for people who will be displaced in the future. The discussants stressed the importance of a depoliticised, multi-stakeholder approach including refugees themselves, civil society and cities.

As refugees...we are subjects of laws and system that were not created for us or by us, and while it is referred to as refugee protection, unfortunately with a lot of events around the world we see that in many ways it hypothesizes a system designed to be against us rather than protect us. (Ms Rez Gardi, Harvard Satter Human Rights Fellow)

The second discussion focused on solutions, with particular consideration given to internal displacement and statelessness. The former included reflections on the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the importance of a whole-of-government response and the intersectionality between forced displacement and climate change-induced mobility. A wholistic approach to ending statelessness was also discussed, with consideration given to the role of parliaments, the need for budgetary reports and the need to address gender-based discrimination.



Refugee scholar using a microscope during his medical studies in Uganda. © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy



Refugee scholar speaks at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum in Geneva. © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy



[Session recording link](#)

East and Horn of Africa

Hosted by the [Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium](#) and the [Institute for Security Studies \(ISS\)](#)

The central goal of the GCR is to facilitate the self-reliance of refugees and host communities, thereby providing a lasting solution to protracted refugee situations through responsibility and burden-sharing. The Eastern Africa Region, which is home to 4.3 million of the 6.3 million refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa. 9.5 million of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) out of 18.5 million also live in the region. The central goal of the GCR is to facilitate the self-reliance of refugees and host communities, thereby providing a lasting solution to protracted refugee situations through responsibility and burden-sharing.

As six of the eight African GCR rollout countries are located in the region i.e., Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the Somalia situation, the first session reviewed the application of the GCR's Comprehensive Refugees Response Framework (CRRF) in the region. Discussants particularly spoke to the utilisation of regional tools like the World Bank's *regional sub-window for refugees and host communities and Development Response to Displacement Impact Project*; a multi-stakeholder rights and needs based programming approach and constant dialogue, such as those facilitated through the IGAD's annual stock-taking processes.

Policy changes to align to the GCR and expansion to refugees of access to services, especially in education, has been a key development in the region. In support of the coalition campaign increase the percentage of qualified refugee youth accessing higher education to 15 per cent by the year 2030, (#15by30) the second panel reviewed the significant gains that have been made in fostering collaboration between universities, NGOs, and other educational organizations to build out pathways and offer scholarships that make this goal possible. It particularly explored how contextualized and student-centered experiences supported by technology and innovation, can be prioritized to advance protection efforts across East and the Horn of Africa.

This panel contributed to the implementation of the 2019 Global Refugee Forum Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium's coalition pledge to 'align our interventions with national digital priorities to alleviate barriers to access and leverage technological investments to serve more refugee youth'.

 **Detailed session report**
[Session 1](#)
[Session 2](#)



Two refugee women smiling in Kenya. © UNHCR/Betty Pres



Refugee women walking into an airport in South Africa. © UNHCR/James Oatway



[Session recording link](#)



[Session recording link](#)

Southern Africa

Hosted by the [Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria](#).

Cast against a broader African context, the Southern Africa panels reflected upon the needs for more concerted effort towards refugee protection, including leveraging on norms and experiences across various governance levels.

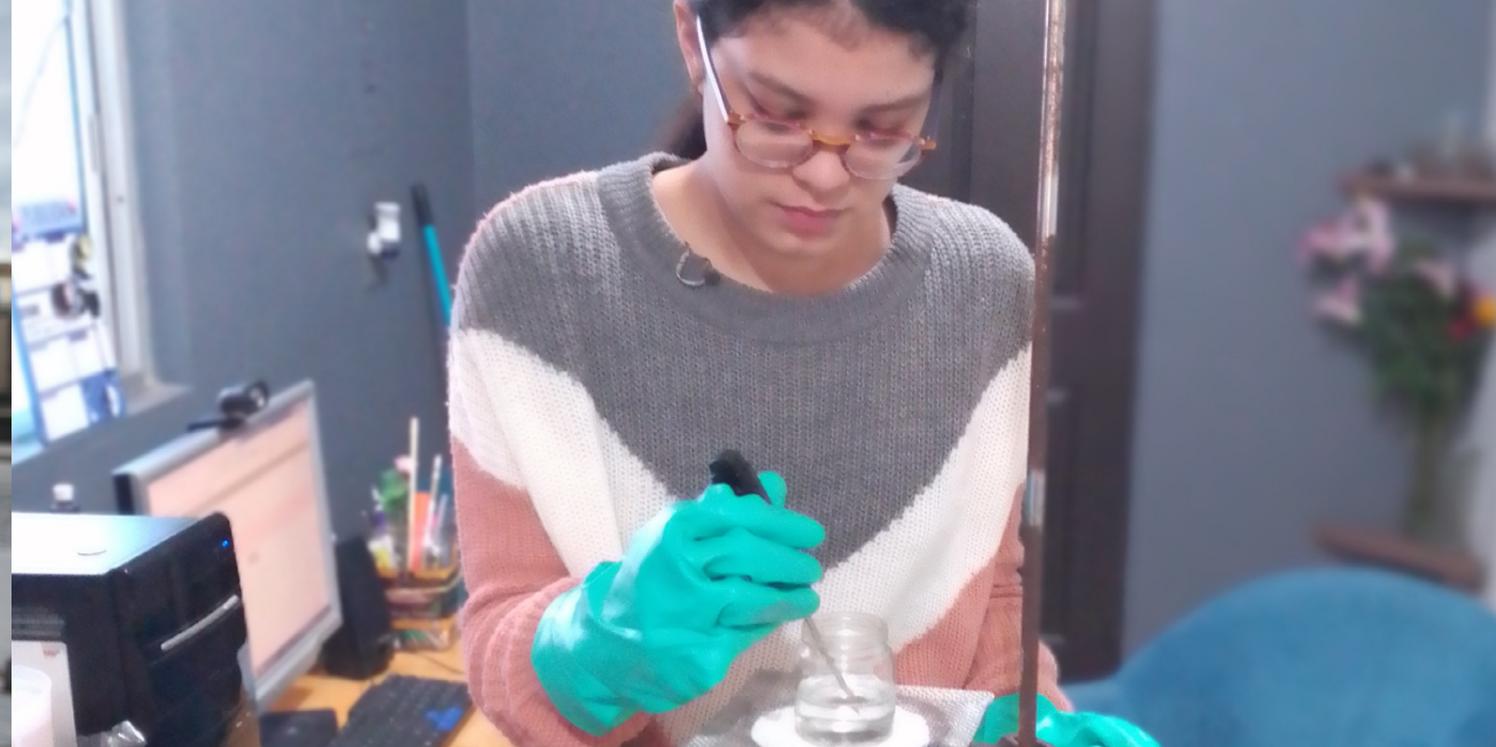
Panellists in the first discussion reflected on the political dimensions of responsibility sharing and refugee protection as well as challenges and opportunities such as the complementary relationship between the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 Organisation of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects

of Refugee Problems in Africa as well as migrant governance and a whole-of-society approach to the protection of refugees in the 16-member Southern African Development Community. In the second panel, interdisciplinary reflections highlighted opportunities and challenges for specific communities of displaced people in Botswana, Zambia and South Africa.

 **Detailed Session report**
[Session 1 and 2](#)



Refugee scholarship recipient stands outside a university in France. © UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau



Refugee student conducting a science experiment. © UNHCR



[Session recording link](#)



[Session recording link](#)

Europe

Hosted by the [University of Essex Human Rights Centre](#), and the [ASILE Network](#).

Over the past seventy years Europe has provided protection and solutions directly and indirectly. The GCR adds a new dimension to protection and solutions and also to the operationalization of interoperability between different actors. How does Europe fit into the new model of the international community acting as a whole?

In the first panel, speakers reflected on how the concept of protection has developed under international law since the creation of the UNHCR Statute in 1950. Discussants shared through the lenses of research, practice and lived experience of displacement what protection means for individuals under international law, and looked at how European responses have been influenced by external voices and how practice and developments in Europe affect protection beyond the region.

If we don't take refugee voices seriously, if we don't see them as active agents, then we will have vicious cycles of policies that repeat

*themselves without improvements.
(Mr Mohammed Badran, Founder of Syrian Volunteers in the Netherlands)*

The second panel assessed the most recent developments in EU Asylum Policy through the lens of the GCR core guiding principles: international refugee protection and human rights. It examined the ways in which EU policies focused on 'contained mobility' affect trust in internal and external EU asylum policies. Particular attention was paid to the ways in which refugee voices and agency could be better reflected in EU asylum decision-making dynamics.

 **Detailed Session report**
[Session 1](#)
[Session 2](#)

These panels contributed to the implementation of the 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledges from University of Essex (teaching and training) and the coalition pledged to Enhancing Meaningful Refugee Participation.



[Session recording link](#)

Latin America

Hosted by the [Sergio Vieira de Mello Academic Chair of the Federal University of ABC, Brazil](#).

The regional approach to the International Refugee Law in Latin America is comprehensive and multidimensional. These panels aimed to provide country-specific examples of these protections in relation to Cartagena Regime and the Global Compact on Refugees.

The first discussion examined protection through experiences in Chile and Mexico. The second panel took a detailed look at local integration in Argentina and the opportunities and challenges across various governance levels for displaced people residing in climate change hotspots.

These panels contributed to the implementation of the [2019 Global Refugee Forum coalition pledge by the Latin American Academic Network on Law and Integration of Refugees](#).



Refugee university student in India sitting in a chair. © UNHCR/Daniel Ginsianmun



[Session recording link](#)



[Session recording link](#)

Asia Pacific

Hosted by the [Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, University of New South Wales](#), Sydney, Australia.

Reflecting two different displacement challenges, the Asia Pacific panels provided interdisciplinary reflections on the Rohingya refugee crisis and displacement in the context of climate change. Analysis of the former began with a historical reflection of the Andaman Sea crisis of 2015 that saw some 8,000 Rohingya and Bangladeshis stranded at sea in dire humanitarian conditions, and threw into sharp relief the region's limited capacity to respond in a timely manner to the challenges of maritime migration. This was then compared and contrasted with the 2017, mass exodus of 750,000 Rohingya from Myanmar into Bangladesh.

The discussion then explored some of the key outstanding issues resulting from this crisis and how progress towards durable solutions might be made.

The second conversation examined the notion of 'displacement' in the context of disasters and climate change. While the threat posed by climate change is real, its manifestations are not as straightforward as we might think. For instance, the idea that rising sea levels will displace millions of people and create 'climate refugees' is a popular trope, but it has little evidential grounding. Within the Pacific, multiple and diverse types of mobility, as well as immobility, have been used as coping strategies over centuries.

Pacific Islands have been incredibly effective at taking proactive steps locking down borders, taking rapid action [in the pandemic]. I think this is the same in the climate change space: they are often held up as these iconic sites of vulnerability and risk and exposure, yet the Pacific Islands are also places where some of the most forward-thinking and active policy and community action is occurring, so there are lots of synergies and complexities...and definitely lessons to be learned. (Dr Celia McMichael, Senior Lecturer in the School of Geography at the University of Melbourne)

These panels contributed to the implementation of the 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledge by the Kaldor Centre at University of New South Wales.



Detailed session report

[Session 1](#)
[Session 2](#)

This panel explored how a more nuanced understanding of displacement in the context of disasters and climate change, and its relationship to international protection, can open up possibilities for different kinds of durable solutions.



Fashion designer tutors two refugee students in Indonesia © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck



Refugee student in a classroom in Jordan. © UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau



Refugee student receives his undergraduate degree in in Ghana. © UNHCR/Nicholas S.Adatsi



[Session recording link](#)



[Session recording link](#)



[Session recording link](#)



[Session recording link](#)

Middle East and North Africa

Hosted by the [Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies, American University of Cairo](#).

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is the largest region in terms of producing and hosting refugees. The Syrian Arab Republic continues to be the source of the highest number of refugees worldwide (6.6 million), with earlier refugee flows produced and received by the region included those fleeing Palestine, Iraq, South Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia. MENA countries have maintained largely open doors, hosted millions of refugees and asylum-seekers, and provided for their livelihoods within the limit of their available resources complemented by international cooperation.

The first of the two regional sessions addressed compared the legal policy frameworks for hosting refugees in Lebanon, Egypt and Morocco.

The second session reflected upon how the Syria crisis has shaped policy and practice on both protection and solutions in the region.

In my view, was that the humanitarian and development nexus became a reality with the 3RP. It bridged the gap, as the two arms could now work together in addressing displacement in the region. (Dr Mary Kawar, Former Jordanian Minister for Planning and International Cooperation)



Detailed session report
[Session 1 & 2](#)

West and Central Africa

Hosted by the [Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana](#).

The West and Central African region faces multiple humanitarian challenges associated with forced displacement. While political conflicts were responsible for population displacements in the 1990s and early 2000s, the forced displacement situation in the region has deteriorated in the last decade, as a result of a sharp increase of violent extremists' activities and counter insurgency operations by national and international security forces.

Recent data provided by UNHCR indicates that the stock of refugees, internally displaced persons, and stateless people displaced from countries in the sub-region has seen significant increase over the years.

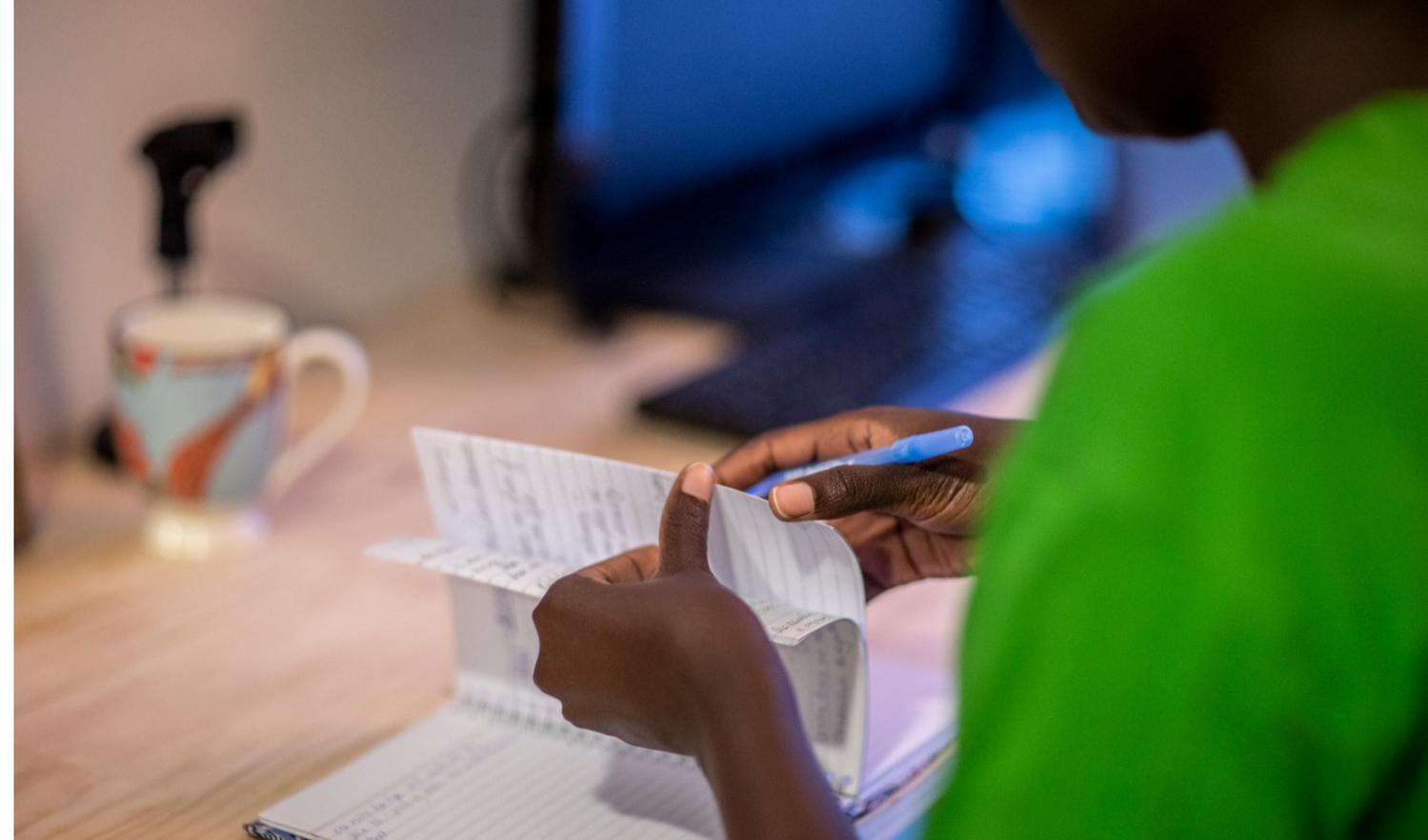
The first panel examined the international, regional and national response to forced displacement in the Western and Central African regions. The discussions shed light on the compatibility between international frameworks, such as 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and Global Compact on Refugees, and national frameworks for refugee protection. Panellists discussed past and present solutions, best practices, and challenges associated with the protection of forcibly displaced persons in the region. In looking forward, the panellists made recommendations for strengthening mechanisms for protecting refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in West and Central Africa.

The GCR recommends a sustainable partnership approach as States, multi-stakeholders and other social partners pick up responsibilities to ensure sustainable protection of forcibly displaced persons. Panellists in the second session discussed the international and regional cooperation as well as national level collaboration among various stakeholders for dealing with protracted displacement in West and Central Africa. The panel reflected on past and present cases, lessons learnt, best practices, and challenges of working with local and whole-of-society actors to protect refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in West and Central Africa.

In particular, the discussions focused also on ways in which development actors, the ECOWAS and humanitarian actors such as UNCHR, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) could strengthen partnership to implement refugee management strategies to benefit both refugees and host communities.

 **Detailed session report**
[Session 1](#)
[Session 2](#)

Data and Information sharing among the different actors is the way to strengthen partnership for comprehensive refugee response (Mr Usman Adamu Obeche, Programme Officer for Humanitarian Affairs in the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs of the ECOWAS Commission)



Refugee woman writes in a notebook. © UNHCR/Heidi Woodman



Niger. Eritrean refugees (left to right), Habtom, Nur and Berek spend their last day at the reception centre in Niamey that has hosted them since being evacuated from Libya in February 2018. Tonight, they begin new lives in France. © UNHCR/Louise Donovan



[Session recording link](#)



[Session recording link](#)

North America

Hosted by the [Local Engagement Refugee Research Network \(LERRN\)](#).

The North American panels focused on the meaning and implementation of UNHCR's core mandate as articulated in Paragraph 1 of UNHCR's 1950 Statute:

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, acting under the authority of the General Assembly, shall assume the function of providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments and, subject to the approval of the Governments concerned, private organizations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities.

Discussants considered North American perspectives on the 'who, what, and how of realizing protection and solutions, both *within* North American and *through* North American engagement in the global refugee regime.

The first session examined the past, present and future of realizing protection and solutions within North America. It considered challenges to protection (admission agreements, detention, border practices) and solutions (integration, sponsorship, pathways to citizenship) in the North American context.

Taking a regional approach and including perspectives from Canada, the US and Mexico, the panel considered the differences and lessons from these various national contexts, from the perspective of state practice, civil society actors, and sub-state actors. The panel also reflected on the diversity of North American perspectives to understand how differences can be understood and approaches designed that speak to this diversity.

We need regional cooperation to ensure the human rights of migrants and refugees.
(Ms Alejandra Macías Delgado,
Asylum Access Mexico)

This session considered the role of North American states (Canada, the US and Mexico) as actors within the refugee regime. Some of these actors include refugee representatives, the private sector, academics, NGOs, and local or regional governments. The panel took stock of past forms of engagement as donor states, host states, resettlement countries and leaders in policy development and diplomatic engagement. Looking forward, it also considered how North American perspectives can help advance dialogue on future questions and challenges facing the regime, including:

- Refugee inclusion and leadership
- Addressing diverse forms of displacement, including climate migration and IDPs

- Linking humanitarian, development and peace-building responses
- Advancing localization and the inclusion of local perspectives in global discussions

The panel included a critical reflection on power relations between actors in the refugee regime and the changing political context within which UNHCR's mandate is pursued, including commitment to multilateralism, public discourse, and public support for refugees.

Address the underlying crises, the political challenges that lie at the heart of why people are where they are.
(Mr Robert Rae, Ambassador and Permanent Representative-Designate of Canada to the United Nations in New York)

These panels contributed to the implementation of the 2019 Global Refugee Forum coalition pledges by the LERRN Network, York University and the coalition pledge on Enhancing Meaningful Refugee Participation.

 **Detailed session report links**
[Session 1](#)
[Session 2](#)



Canada. On a beach in downtown Toronto, the Nouman children from Homs in Syria play with one of their friends and sponsors, Marion Adams. © UNHCR/Annie Sakkab

Acknowledgments

The organisers acknowledge with thanks the contributions of the more than eighty academic and multi-stakeholder speakers who shared insights from research, policy and practice during the event.

Global

- Ms Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR
- Prof Agnes Vadai MP, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union International Humanitarian Law Committee
- Prof Elizabeth Ferris, Member of the Expert Advisory Group for the United Nations Secretary General's High-level Panel on Internal Displacement and Research Professor, Georgetown University
- Ms Hala Haj Taleb, Student Leader, Tertiary Refugee Student Network
- Prof Geoff Gilbert, Chair of the GAIN Secretariat and Professor of International Human Rights & Humanitarian Law, University of Essex
- Dr Helen Durham, Director of International Law and Policy, International Committee of the Red Cross/Crescent
- Ms Rez Gardi, Harvard Satter Human Rights Fellow & Co-Founder of the Center for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies
- Ms Anh Thu Duong, Senior Policy Advisor, Geneva Cities Hub
- Dr Madeline Garlick, Chief of Protection, Planning and Legal Advice, UNHCR
- Ms Rachel Criswell, Senior Policy Officer, UNHCR

East Africa

- Mr Nicholas Sabato, Co-Lead of the Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium & Director at Arizona State University
- Mr Philemon K. Misoy, Project Liaison Officer at Borderless Higher Education for Refugees Project, Windle International Kenya
- Ms Uwizihwe Leonne Laura, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager at Kepler
- Prof Gasim Badri, President of Ahfad University for Women, Sudan
- Ms Joyce Talamoi, Education Specialist at Norwegian Refugee Council, Uganda
- Ms Otilia Anna Maunganidze, Head, Special Projects at the Institute for Security Studies
- Ms Clementine Nkweta-Salami, Director of the Regional Bureau for the East, Horn and Great Lakes Region of Africa, UNHCR
- Mr Charles Obila, Migration and Displacement Officer, Inter Governmental Authority on Development
- Ms Aude Galli, Manager, Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat, Kenya
- Ms Tsion Tadesse Abebe, Senior Researcher, Migration at the Institute for Security Studies Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Southern Africa

- Prof Frans Viljoen, Director, Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria
- Dr Cristiano d'Orsi Senior Research Fellow and Lecturer, University of Johannesburg
- Prof Christopher Changwe Nshimbi Director, Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation, University of Pretoria
- Ms Angèle Marie Dikongué-Atangana, Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, UNHCR
- Dr Romola Adeola, Coordinator, Global Engagement Network on Internal Displacement in Africa
- Dr Elizabeth Macharia-Mokobi, Senior Lecturer and Head of Department, Department of Law, University of Botswana
- Dr Pedro Figueiredo Neto, Researcher, University of Lisbon
- Ms Jessica Kaye Lawrence, Attorney, Lawyers for Human Rights / University of Johannesburg

Europe

- Prof Geoff Gilbert, Chair of the GAIN Secretariat and Professor of International Human Rights & Humanitarian Law, University of Essex
- Ms Rossella Pagliuchi-Lor, Representative to the United Kingdom, UNHCR
- Prof Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, United Nations and Deputy Director of the University of Essex Human Rights Centre
- Ms Claire Simmons, PhD Candidate, University of Essex
- Mr Abdikadir Bare Abikar, Co-founder of the Dadaab Response Association and 2020 Fellow at the British Institute in Eastern Africa
- Dr Roberto Cortinovis, Researcher, Centre for European Policy Studies
- Prof Jens Vedsted-Hansen, Professor, Aarhus University
- Prof Rosemary Byrne, New York University Abu Dhabi & Advisory Board Member to the ASILE Project
- Prof Audrey Macklin, Chair in International Human Rights Law at the University of Toronto and ASILE Project Country Expert & Advisory Board Member
- Dr Meltem İneli Çiğer, Assistant Professor, Suleyman Demirel University & ASILE Project Partner
- Mr Mohammed Badran, Founder of Syrian Volunteers in the Netherlands
- Ms Anila Noor, Member of the European Commission's Expert Group on the Views of Migrants and Steering Committee Member of the Global Refugee Led Network
- Dr Nikolas Tan, PhD Fellow, Danish Institute for Human Rights & ASILE Project Partner

Latin America

- Prof Gilberto M. A. Rodrigues, Professor and Coordinator of the Graduate Program in International Relations at the Federal University of ABC
- Prof Fernanda Gutierrez Merino, Coordinator, Legal Aid for Refugees and Venezuelan Mobility, University Diego Portales
- Prof Elba Yannet Coria Marquez, Human Rights Lawyer; Collaborator, KIND-Mexico
- Prof Valeria Marcia Allo, Coordinator, Eligibility Branch, National Commission for Refugees (CONARE), Argentina
- Prof Carolina de A. B. Claro, Professor, International Relations Institute, University of Brasilia

Asia Pacific

- Dr Madeline Gleeson, Senior Research Associate at the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, University of New South Wales
- Mr Keane Shum, Senior Policy Officer for the Myanmar Situation in the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, UNHCR
- Ms Wai Wai Nu, Human Rights Advocate and Founder of the Women Peace Network and the Yangon Youth Center
- Mr Phil Robertson, Deputy Director of Human Rights Watch's Asia Division. Mr Dato' Steven Wong, Co-Convenor of the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration and the former Deputy Chief Executive and Member of the Board of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Malaysia
- Prof Jane McAdam, Director of the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, University of New South Wales
- Dr Celia McMichael, Senior Lecturer in the School of Geography at the University of Melbourne
- Dr Tammy Tabe, Lecturer at the Pacific Centre for Environment & Sustainable Development, University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji
- Ms Chanelle Taoi, Associate Legal Officer for the Multi-Country Office in Canberra, UNHCR

West and Central Africa

- Dr Samuel Agblorti, Department of Population and Health of the University of Cape Coast
- Prof Joseph Kofi Teye, Director of the Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana and Co-Director of the UKRI South-South Migration, Inequality and Development Hub
- Dr Veronica Fynn Bruey, Lecturer at the University of Cape Coast and Founder of the Displaced Peoples collaborative research network

- Mr Murdakai Titus, Assistant Director with the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja
- Mr Andrew Ginsberg, Senior Durable Solutions Officer in Ghana, UNHCR
- Dr Mary Boatemaa Setrana, Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana, Legon
- Mr Patrice Dossou Ahouansou, Senior Protection Officer in the Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa, UNHCR
- Mr Usman Adamu Obeche, Programme Officer for Humanitarian Affairs in the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs of the ECOWAS Commission, Abuja-Nigeria
- Mr Philippe Branchat, Regional Thematic Specialist for West and Central Africa, IOM
- Mr Padi Tetteh, Head of the Ghana Refugee Board

Middle East and North Africa

- Prof Ibrahim Awad, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, the American University in Cairo
- Prof Boutaina Ismaili, Professor of Economics, Agdal -University Mohammed V Rabat
- Prof Parastou Hassouri, Adjunct Professor at the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, the American University in Cairo
- Prof Tamirace Fakhoury, Associate Professor, Lebanese American University and the Director of the Institute for Social Justice and Conflict Resolution
- Mr Mohamed Dayri, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Libya and former Legal Director for MENA Region, UNHCR
- Ms Shaden Khallaf, Senior Policy Advisor in the Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa, UNHCR
- Prof Jinan Bastaki, Assistant Professor of International Law, United Arab Emirates University
- Dr Mary Kavar, Former Jordanian Minister for Planning and International Cooperation

North America

- Prof Jennifer Hyndman, Associate Vice-President Research, York University
- Prof Michaela Hynie, Professor, York University
- Ms Alejandra Macías Delgadillo, Asylum Access Mexico
- Prof Delphine Nakache, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa
- Mr Eskinder Negash, President & CEO, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
- Prof James Milner, Project Director, Local Engagement Refugee Research Network
- Ms Julie Crowley, Regional Director, Central & West Africa, International Development Research Centre
- Mr Mustafa Alio, Managing Director, Jumpstart Refugee Talent
- Prof Jennifer Bond, Managing Director, Refugee Hub
- Prof Elizabeth Ferris, Member of the Expert Advisory Group for the United Nations Secretary General's High-level Panel on Internal Displacement and Research Professor, Georgetown University
- Ms Ana Macouzet, Senior Policy Advisor, Open Society Foundations
- Mr Robert Rae, Ambassador and Permanent Representative-Designate of Canada to the United Nations in New York
- Prof Leah Zamore, Director, Humanitarian Crises, New York University

GAIN Secretariat

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70 Years Protecting People Forced to Flee

Virtual Conference on the 70th Anniversary of the founding of the Office of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees

