



Written Contribution to the FINAL DRAFT of the Global Compact on Refugees (as of 26 June 2018)

1. Fostering the Global Compact's "Whole-of-Society" Approach through WEA's network of national and regional alliances

Regional and sub-regional approaches:

§30: *"The exchange of good practices among relevant regional and sub-regional mechanisms will be facilitated by UNHCR on a regular basis in the context of Global Refugee Forums to bring in different perspectives and to encourage coherence."*

We are actively committed and engaged with our members calling everybody to welcome refugees; and to influence our societies to become more enabling when it comes to refugee recovery. Every day, our members are coming alongside refugees to provide food, clothing, safe accommodation, fostering, education, health care, hospitality, befriending, private sponsorship, counselling, pastoral care, language training, legal assistance, support finding employment and job opportunities.

Through our networks of national and regional alliances, the WEA aims at assisting refugees at every stage along their forcibly displaced experience: we are present with those departing their homeland, we are present with those on the move, we are present with those reaching a new soil and seeking integration, and we are present with those having a chance to return. By this ministry of presence, we want to express the vision of one human family as intended by God to all our brothers and sisters who are refugees and migrants.

To share a few of ongoing practices, in 2001, WEA sponsored a global consultation of Christians serving refugees that became the Refugee Highway Partnership (RHP) – an international network of churches, agencies and individuals serving forcibly displaced people. The RHP is creating and sustaining a community that helps facilitate more effective ministry, stimulate strategic initiatives, and envision and equip the church so that refugee ministries are strengthened and more refugees are served. The RHP is a Global Partner of WEA and is led by its Leadership Council.

In 2015, WEA launched our Refugee Task Force to help facilitate a coordinated response from the global to grass roots level and strengthen collaboration between various Evangelical Alliances, agencies, churches and partners that serve the needs of refugees while also addressing key concerns related to the protection of the most vulnerable communities. The task force is led by WEA’s Director of Public Engagement and includes WEA’s Ambassador for Refugees, Displaced and Stateless People, the Executive Director of WEA’s Religious Liberty Commission, and the Chairperson of the Refugee Highway Partnership. The task force works closely with WEA’s United Nations team in New York and Geneva, along with leaders of Regional and National Evangelical Alliances and a growing number of partner organizations.

2. Listening to the voices of the displaced

A multi-stakeholder and partnership approach

§34: *“Responses are most effective when they actively and meaningfully engage those they are intended to protect and assist. Relevant actors will, wherever possible, continue to develop and support consultative processes that enable **refugees and host community members** to assist in designing appropriate, accessible and inclusive responses... Mechanisms to receive complaints, and investigate and prevent fraud, abuse and corruption help to ensure accountability.”*

The WEA is honored to have the opportunity to bring a voice to the tables of policy analysis and decision making. The ability and credibility of our engagement at those tables rely on our understanding of the issue through the lens of those whose issue is their own. Who best can speak on refugees/migration than displaced persons themselves? As the WEA involves itself in listening with refugees on their plight, hopes, and challenges, the language of accountability of their story is ours to pick up on. Stepping away from the grassroots of issues into the meeting

rooms of consultation, we commit to take the lived experience, the voices of reality with us - in mind and in spirit.

3. Breaking down traditional barriers that prevent faith based organizations from participation in refugee response

Empowering local authorities and other local actors:

§37: "... In consultation with national authorities and in respect of relevant legal frameworks, support by the international community as a whole may be provided to strengthen institutional capacities, infrastructure and accommodation at local level, including through funding and capacity development where appropriate. Recruitment of local personnel by humanitarian and development agencies is encouraged in line with relevant laws and policies, while bearing in mind the need for continued capacity of local actors, organizations and structures."

As regards to §37, it is traditionally conceded that there are hindrances limiting partnerships between humanitarian agencies and local faith actors, such as lack of capacity, lack of compliance with international standards, fears of proselytization and partiality. However, through recent transformation in guiding frameworks, there has been an increasing level of comfort with different faith groups collaborating on major projects, including migration and refugees. The WEA stresses the significance of the "whole-of-society" approach, calls for members of diverse faith communities to work outside the boundaries of their own comfort zone and in-house culture, and to speak beyond the language of their own organizations. We inspire faith-based actors to work with a conviction to address human suffering unconditionally.

Comment/Suggestion:

- We suggest working toward equitable partnerships. We call for attention to traditional barriers that prevent faith-based actors from coordinating and planning refugee assistance programs. We hope that the finalized Compact will rightly recognize and include the important roles that FBOs can play at an earlier point in the process of refugee response. In fact, refugee faith communities are also an ideal group to consult with within the refugee population when it comes to program and project development.

- More specifically, dismantling these barriers can include strengthening capacity of state actors, collaborating with mediating organizations, connecting and familiarizing external staff with local faith culture/representatives, and implementing legitimate methods of engagement in a humanitarian context.
- As a result, we recommend adding a statement that will identify the usefulness of the UNHCR Affirmations for Faith Leaders as a helpful resource that informs faith-based actors about appropriate boundaries. This addition may help minimize fears of improper faith-based engagement, e.g. hidden agendas, proselytism as a motivation, discrimination against women, etc.

4. Critical roles of faith-based organizations

A multi-stakeholder and partnership approach:

§41: *“Faith-based actors could support the planning and delivery of arrangements to assist refugees and host communities, including in the areas of conflict prevention, reconciliation, and peacebuilding, as well as other relevant areas.”*

The WEA wants to assert the pivotal contribution that faith based communities can make that compliments the life-saving work of humanitarian players.

Comment/Suggestion:

The WEA applauds the “whole-of-society” framework of the Global Compact on Refugees. We welcome the inclusion of faith-based organizations as part of the multi-stakeholder and partnership approach, as indicated in paragraph 41. Furthermore, we want to emphasize the critical roles of **local** and **national** faith-based actors, not only organizations at the international level.

5. Prioritizing solutions for those most at risk: separated and unaccompanied children, people with disabilities, older people, women, victims of gender-based violence, victims and survivors of human trafficking, etc.

Addressing specific needs:

§51: *“The measures [in Part B] will take into account, meaningfully engage and seek input from those with diverse needs and potential vulnerabilities, including girls and women; children, adolescents and youth; persons belonging to minorities; survivors of sexual and gender-based*

violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, or trafficking in persons; older persons; and persons with disabilities.”

§60: “... *The development of non-custodial and community-based alternatives to detention, particularly for children, will also be supported.”*

The WEA welcome the emphasis on the best interests of the child as a major advancement of the Compact. We also applaud the support for finding alternatives to detention. The WEA urges relevant parties to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all refugee and migrant children, regardless of their status. We ought to give primary consideration at all times to the best interests of the child. This principle is applied particularly to unaccompanied children and those separated from their families. It is essential that we respond with compassion, show kindness and give dignity to the precious men, women, children and babies who have been uprooted from their homes. We believe *all persons are worthy of respect* and are to be given the opportunity to live up to their full potential. As a voice of faith, we are to demonstrate God’s unfailing love through practical action and friendship; as it is God Himself who has called us to love one another. Inclusive of our engagement with refugees is the motivation to realign displacement with robust communities of creativity, peace and integral relationships.

The WEA therefore promotes a framework of “***justice and compassion***” as relevant stakeholders respond to the refugee crisis:

Justice – Human Rights

Our response must recognize the right of people to flee conflict zones and seek asylum. We must not penalize asylum-seekers for crossing borders without permission and/or personal documents. We must not permit the forced expulsion or return of asylum-seekers who have a credible fear of losing their freedom and/or life. We must recognize the right of refugees to work, to have access to primary education, to have access to the legal system, and to have legal documentation necessary for travel. And we must recognize the need to share the burden of caring for asylum-seekers and refugees with countries that carry a heavier burden than others.

Compassion – Biblical Mandate

We believe God clearly expects his people to treat foreigners with justice. The Biblical models show that God expects us to actively love and care for them. The former UN High Commissioner for Refugees and current Secretary-General, H. E. António Guterres, has asked faith leaders to be a part of the solution to the global refugee crisis by working to create “*space in*

the hearts and minds” of people for refugees and asylum seekers.¹ This is an essential part of a caring response to refugees and asylum seekers within society. Churches are communities in which common misunderstandings and myths related to refugees and asylum-seekers can be debunked and corrected. Churches also offer a strategic platform from which society can be influenced. Pastors and church leaders can draw teaching from the Bible to create such space in the hearts and minds of fellow Christians.

6. Immediate Response vis-à-vis Durable Solutions

Meeting needs and supporting communities:

§64: “ ... Efforts to support refugees and host communities in no way diminish, and are in fact complementary to, the need to facilitate future arrangements for durable solutions.”

Two-Standpoint Paradigm:

The WEA formulated a two-standpoint paradigm to address refugee-related issues. One is the standpoint of *transactional needs*. How does the church provide those needs of food, clothing, accommodation, medical services, etc.? The second standpoint is identified as *recovery needs*. How does the church provide long term acceptance and invitation to those whose experience of migration has brought trauma and identity issues? As the church we work beyond a model of governance structures, through our brother and sister relationships as models of true community with the recovery standpoint becoming the offer which involves us all.²

Humanitarian responses usually fall short of providing durable solutions to forced displacement. With specific evidences from a case study in Kakuma, Kenya, the WEA highlights how churches from the refugee camp and host communities offer recovery work that strengthens human resilience and hope by investing in community, faith, emotional well-being, personal capacity and opportunities for refugees to make a meaningful contribution to the welfare of others. The need for hope, identity, and self-worth is as real and pressing as is the need for food, water and shelter. The loss of these intangibles erodes the core of what it means to be human and can make life insufferable. Humanitarian agencies work to keep people physically

¹ High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges, Theme: *Faith and Protection* (12-13 December 2012), Chairman’s Summary, by Antonio Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, p.3.

² *Working with Governments, Faith Groups, NGO's and Refugee/Migrant Communities*, by Christine MacMillan – WEA’s Associate Secretary General - Public Engagement, Chair: Global Human Trafficking & Refugee Task Forces

alive and safe. Recovery work seeks to keep hope alive by strengthening human resilience. The nature of humanitarian response lends itself to impersonal transactional services. Those on the receiving end often feel dehumanized in the process. In contrast, recovery work is highly relational and aims to rehumanize care receivers.³

Comment/Suggestion:

Developing a Humane Short-term Response

Development and implementation of a long-term response will take considerable negotiation and time during which a short-term response is necessary. Identifying an acceptable long-term solution to the refugee crisis can frame short-term response in a way that provides helpful perspective and generates hope that the present crisis will not continue or escalate indefinitely. The short-term response needs to include the following:

- *Value human life above other agendas*
- *Raise awareness and advocate on behalf of asylum seekers*
- *Embrace and empower grassroots community initiatives that promote integration (including faith-based initiatives)*
- *Increase international burden sharing*

Developing a Realistic Long-term Response

We must develop a long-term response strategy that:

- *Creates the possibility for people to recover from forced displacement*
- *Minimizes the vulnerability of asylum seekers*
- *Offers a long-term sustainable response to the refugee crisis:*
 - *Decreases the uncontrolled flow of asylum seekers*
 - *Stops the dependency of asylum seekers upon criminal organizations and networks*

7. Training and equipping for faith-based actors in humanitarian service

Fostering good relations and peaceful coexistence:

³ *Recovery Work: The Strategic Role That the Church Can Play in Recovery from Forced Displacement*, by Thomas P. Albinson - International Association for Refugees

§84: “... In fostering respect and understanding, as well as combating discrimination, the power and positive impact of civil society, faith-based organizations, and the media, including social media, will be harnessed.”

The WEA, in collaboration with the Refugee Highway Partnership, is developing resources to raise awareness on refugees and migration amongst civil society/faith communities, e.g. discussion guidelines, sermon outlines, etc. The WEA believes that refugees are more than people in need - they are an important part of the holistic solution to their challenges. Since majority of refugees identify with a faith, they generally have a special trust for their faith communities. In fact, refugees often reach out to charity bodies of their faith institutions for basic commodities support well before they can access services provided by state agencies or international organizations. Local faith-based actors are usually first responders and provide services where intergovernmental and/or state resources are lacking.

Comment/Suggestion:

- For stated reasons, UNHCR and other state agencies should seek to collaborate and integrate local faith communities as partners in service provision, in order to avoid duplication and parallel systems.
- We recommend that trusted faith communities will be intentionally equipped and engaged as service providers - especially when it comes to trauma care, emotional support, care for the most vulnerable refugees, etc. We recognize that these faith communities may first need appropriate training to give them the capacity to care for these special needs.

The WEA would like to express our appreciation to the UNHCR for extending the opportunity to discuss and provide comments/suggestions on the formulation process of the Global Compact on Refugees. We look forward to collaborating with member states, NGOs, fellow faith groups, and refugee/migrant communities as we continue working together in this urgent and important task.