

## Refugee women and girls: Key to the Global Compact

**An action research partnership to implement and monitor commitments to gender equality, ending sexual and gender-based violence and the Age Gender and Diversity approach in the Global Compact on Refugees.**

This collaborative project will facilitate and monitor the implementation of gender commitments made in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Underpinned by UNHCR' Age Gender and Diversity (AGD) Policy, these commitments seek to improve international protection for refugee women and girls, support gender equality and women's leadership and end sexual and gender-based violence. The project is led by researchers from UNSW's Forced Migration Research Network, who undertook the Gender Audit of the Thematic meetings which informed the development of the GCR. Working in partnership with refugee women, academics, service providers and UNHCR the project will develop and trial a suite of implementation tools and monitoring and evaluation strategies in five countries in the Asia Pacific.



## Why this project?

In 2016, all members of the UN agreed to a set of commitments to improve the protection of refugees and migrants, as a shared global responsibility, in the [New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants](#). The Declaration set out a plan to further develop these commitments in a [Global Compact for Migration](#) and a [Global Compact on Refugees](#). These compacts have been drafted over the following two years through a series of meetings and consultations, along with a concrete Program of Action (PoA) for the GCR. Researchers Linda Bartolomei and Eileen Pittaway led a Gender audit of the Thematic meetings to inform the drafting of the PoA. The final versions of the Compacts were adopted by the General Assembly at the end of 2018. Together, they set out the necessary actions to achieve the comprehensive response to refugees and migrants envisaged by the New York Declaration.

**This project focuses on the commitments to refugee women and girls in the GCR.** Refugee women and girls are most often portrayed as a vulnerable minority. Their capacity to contribute to solutions often goes unrecognised, and gender equality is an elusive goal. Despite the comprehensive law and policy developed over the past 30 years to address the protection needs of refugee women and girls, it is recognised that they still suffer endemic rape and gender-based violence which is both an outcome of and a major barrier to gender equality. The GCR, which includes

strong commitments to UNHCR's AGD policy and an emphasis on refugee participation and capacity-building to ensure gender equality, provides a critical new opportunity to improve protection responses with the active engagement of refugee women and girls.

With a focus on gender equality, and prevention and responses to SGBV, this project will address key commitments in the GCR:

- (i) promoting self-representation particularly of women and girls;
- (ii) working with refugee organisations and networks to develop and trial a suite of tools for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the commitments
- (iii) addressing the four pillars of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, the 'vision' for action set out in the New York Declaration.



## **Key project activities**

- Promotion of gender-specific language and commitments in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and its Program of Action (2018).
- Consultations with refugee women and service providers in five sites, to identify existing gender related gaps and challenges, as well as good or promising practices and potential alternative tools and approaches (current stage 2019- 2020).
- Working with refugee women in each site to identify participatory approaches for monitoring implementation of the GCR's gender related commitments, with refugee women to undertake these monitoring activities.
- Develop and trial tools to support the implementation of commitments to gender equality and to address sexual and gender-based violence, for dissemination on UNHCR's Digital Platform.

## **Project team**

The project is being led by academic researchers Dr Linda Bartolomei and Adjunct Professor Eileen Pittaway and supported by Project Manager Geraldine Doney from the UNSW Forced Migration Research Network. In each site the team is working with local refugee and civil society organisations, Academics, UNHCR and service providers as partners (See details on page 4). Refugee women are actively involved in each stage of the project,

The research has been approved and monitored for compliance with the highest ethical standards by the relevant Human Ethics Committees in each country. The overseas components of the project are supported by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

## **Project aims and objectives**

1. Improve international protection measures for refugee women and girls, by increasing the capacity of service providers to work more effectively with them, including through the effective application of an AGD approach to promote gender equality and support efforts to end sexual and gender-based violence.
2. Ensure the different but particular needs of women and girls, men and boys, and principles of AGD inform the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the GCR across the 4 pillars of the CRRF
3. Strengthen the ability of women's civil society organisations and other stakeholders to include and empower refugee women to be actively involved in program design, implementation, management and monitoring of the GCR.
4. Contribute to an accessible and effective Digital Platform linked directly to AGD commitments in the GCR.

## Project outcomes

1. Influence the development of locally-based models of implementation and evaluation of the AGD framework in the context of the commitments to women and girls outlined in the GCR.
2. Ensure new protection and empowerment models are developed with and used by refugee and local women's groups in partnership with other key stakeholders.
3. Inform UNHCR's GCR monitoring frameworks, with a particular focus on AGD monitoring.
4. Compare and analyse the implementation of the gender and participatory protection principles developed in the GCR in different sites within the Asia-Pacific region.

## Project stages and the involvement of refugee women

The project will take place over three years. It will be completed in three stages, with outcomes from each stage informing the next. Project countries include Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Australia, to cover a range of refugee contexts and challenges. Potential sources of seed funding are also being explored to support refugee women's groups to trial projects as part of the action research methodology.

**Stage 1** (2018) – Promoting strong gender focus in the GCR, informed by consultations with refugee women and their involvement in a gender audit of GCR meetings. Analysis of the final GCR will identify areas for development, monitoring and evaluation. A multi-stakeholder workshop was held in Bangkok in October with refugee women, academics, local NGOs and other key stakeholders which explored what gender equality and an AGD approach means in a refugee context; the barriers to refugee women's participation and what is 'good practice' and how to assess it. The first of a series of 'tools' were developed, for trial and adaptation throughout the project. Academic publications will be produced at each stage of the project.

**Stage 2** (current) – Participatory reciprocal research consultations in each site will identify local challenges to gender equality and SGBV prevention, (in)effective local responses, recommended changes, and strategies for increased refugee women's involvement in addressing challenges. Follow-up consultations/workshops in each site will support the development of implementation tools/strategies with training support for project design and monitoring/evaluation activities. Findings will be shared by refugee women at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum.

**Stage 3** (mid 2020 to end 2021) – Models, tools and films developed in the project will be finalised and made available via UNHCR's planned Digital Platform of good practices. Concrete examples of GCR commitments implemented in practice will be identified by refugee women, who will present their findings at the 70-year Refugee Convention commemoration.

- **Academic partners include:**  
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Associate Professor Shanthy Thambiah and Ayesha Faiz, Gender Studies Program University of Malaya  
Thailand: Dr Sriprapha Petcharamesree, Dr Mark Capaldi and Ratawit Ouaprachanon, Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University.
- **NGO and CBO partners include:**  
AMES Australia, ANCORW, APRRN, Asylum Access Malaysia, Diversitat, JRS, KWO, MDA, MSRI, MYAN, SSI, TBC, Tenaganita and TMSG

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