



Concept Note – MIRPS Working Group on Local Governance
30 September 2022

I. Background

Local governments have an important role to play in responding to the unprecedented levels of displacement in Central America and Mexico. When someone is forced to leave their home, they most often move to urban settings in search of safety and opportunity. Despite limited resources, municipalities are aware of the importance of identifying and responding to the needs of displaced persons in need of international protection, to ensure that plans and programs include the needs and perspectives of these persons, along with the host population, promoting a comprehensive care approach.

The initiative ‘Cities of Solidarity,’ arises from the recommendations identified by States in the region in the Mexico Plan of Action (2004) and the Brazil Plan of Action (2014), with the aim of recognizing the efforts of local governments to provide protection and integration. The plan emphasizes that more concerted efforts are required to ensure the implementation of the necessary protection and social response systems, which must include multiple actions: facilitating access to public services; promoting labor insertion; and enhancing social, cultural and technological opportunities to maintain social cohesion among all inhabitants. As referenced in the Global Compact on Refugees, the creation of networks of local authorities can play a fundamental role in generating a more favorable environment for local integration by sharing good practices on access to rights, and on the provision of services, including with innovative approaches to operational responses.

Framed in the context of the ‘Cities of Solidarity’ initiative, the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) seeks to take advantage of the leadership of local governments to promote collaborative, sustainable, and comprehensive approaches that allow a response to the challenges posed by the displacement of people in need of international protection in host countries, in order to strengthen the resources and capacities of local governments to establish inclusive communities for all residents. This commitment is in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, which seeks to “make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” and “substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans toward inclusion’ by 2030.

In 2021, the MIRPS Working Group on Local Governance was established between Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama to provide a shared platform for consultation, exchange, and joint planning. During the course of the year, the municipal members of the Working Group focused on issues of legal frameworks regarding displaced persons, returnees, and persons in need of international protection in accordance with the contexts



of each country; coordination, partners and services; local development planning processes and identification of multisectoral needs; and community consultation and validation of local development plans, with representatives of local authorities.

II. Key Topics in 2022

Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees

The Call to Local Action is a collaborative effort between the steering committee members of the 'Mayors Mechanism' - United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Mayors Migration Council (MMC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) - and has the support and collaboration of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The three objectives of the Call for Local Action are: (1) To increase the number of local governments that publicly support the Compacts through the Marrakech Mayors Declaration and show growing public leadership and political will; (2) Collect and showcase bold, people-focused local actions that meet or exceed the goals of the Compacts, in order to facilitate idea sharing, peer learning, and replication by other local governments; (3) Create a cohort of publicly recognized local and regional leaders committed to a strong implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) to promote replicability and investment in local and regional practices by States, and form new alliances with international actors.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

UCLG is the largest organization of sub-national governments in the world, with more than 240,000 members in more than 140 member states of the United Nations and defines itself as the united voice and world defender of democratic local self-government, de facto representing more than half the world's population. UCLG member cities and associations are present in more than 120 United Nations Member States in seven regions. The organization's stated mission and work program is to be the united voice and global advocate for democratic local self-government, promoting its values, goals and interests, through cooperation among local governments and within the international community in general. Its work program focuses on: increasing the role and influence of local government and its representative organizations in global governance; becoming the main source of support for a democratic, effective and innovative local government, close to the citizen; and ensuring an effective and democratic global organization.

Mayors Migration Council (MMC)

The Mayors Migration Council (MMC) is a mayor-led advisory and advocacy organization that aims to accelerate ambitious global action on migration and displacement through city diplomacy and practice, creating the conditions for urban migrants, displaced persons and host communities to thrive.



The organization supports mayors to: (1) access and influence state-led diplomatic processes most relevant to migration and displacement; (2) secure financial and technical resources to locally implement the global goals on migration and displacement, including through the Global Cities Fund; (3) elevate the leadership of mayors on the international stage through global communications; (4) generate and disseminate knowledge based on local experiences; and (5) build relationships with local and global champions.

Cities of Solidarity – 10 Criteria and the Self-Assessment Tool

The core of the Cities of Solidarity framework is the 10 Criteria for the Cities of Solidarity, which define the key aspects of local integration. Related to the conditions of inclusion, access to rights and urban environments, this includes: (1) *Civil-Political Inclusion*; (2) *Economic Inclusion*; (3) *Legal Inclusion*; and (4) *Sociocultural Inclusion*. Regarding administration and public policies, it relates to (5) *Institutional Capacity*; (6) *Institutional Commitment*; (7) *Institutional Coordination*; (8) *Reception and Outreach*; and (9) *Referral Systems for People with Specific Needs*. Finally, (10) *Promotion and Creation of Networks* denotes the general progress of the Cities of Solidarity Mechanism.

Additionally, a self-assessment tool, comprised of sets of questions, defines goals and potential commitments related to the ten criteria that serve as a benchmark for local authorities. Each element of the self-assessment tool facilitates three actions: (1) mapping the current situation with respect to the core aspects of each criterion of Cities of Solidarity; (2) analyzing which specific actions and attributes fall under the direct constitutional powers of the municipality and which government functions belong to other state levels; and (3) identifying potential commitments to improve or sustain municipal strategies and plans, to promote social inclusion of displaced people.

UNDP-UNHCR Regional Local Governance Framework

Informed by the consultations in 2021, UNDP and UNHCR launched the Regional Framework for Local Governance in September 2021. The Framework provides tools to implement the Cities of Solidarity Initiative, in line with the UNDP-UNHCR Cooperation Framework for the Rule of Law and Governance, and in support of the MIRPS in Central America and Mexico and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact on Refugees. In 2022, UNDP and UNHCR have implemented pilot support activities, based on available resources, in the municipalities of Upala, Los Chiles (Costa Rica), Esquipulas, Izabal (Guatemala), Choloma, San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, (Honduras), La Chorrera and Panama City (Panama). Interventions are built around four complementary pillars: (1) Integration of forced displacement in local development planning; (2) Protection and access to essential services; (3) Rule of law and e-government, and (4) socio-economic integration and social cohesion.

III. Objectives



The MIRPS Working Group on Local Governance provides a platform for local governments to share their experiences, good practices, and knowledge concerning the inclusion of internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers, refugees, returnees, and displaced persons with international protection needs. In particular, the Working Group will provide a common platform for the adaptation and integration of the best practices of the MIRPS States that comprise the Working Group. Additionally, the technical support of other countries with similar experiences will be used, together with other forums and international organizations on the issue of local governance. The Working Group has four specific objectives:

1. Ensure a common understanding of the Global Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees; the functions of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Mayors Migration Council (MMC) and consider related opportunities for association, training, and municipal financing.
2. Take stock of the good practices developed by local governments in the region and around the world to ensure the effective protection and inclusion of displaced persons and consider opportunities for local adaptation and implementation.
3. Review the Cities of Solidarity Regional Framework, with its 10 Criteria, which define social inclusion at the local level, including the skills, capacities and resources that must be fostered in the local public administration and social support actors to guarantee effective and sustainable integration.
4. Review the roles and support services of regional and international organizations that aim to help municipalities promote the protection and inclusion of refugees and migrants, based on the needs and priorities of local public administrations, to inform local collaboration and partnerships.

IV. Deliverables

The Working Group will be responsible for the following deliverables, to accompany the operational response in the municipalities of their respective countries, in coordination with involved partners:

1. Municipal stakeholders may inform municipal planning on adapting successful approaches to their respective local contexts for greater protection and inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, and persons in need of international protection.
2. The municipal participants benefit from an orientation on the 10 Criteria as per the Cities of Solidarity Framework consider the current alignment of their public management, and the option of making a joint commitment towards this Criteria against the Global Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees.
3. Municipal participants obtain a common understanding of the roles and support services of regional and international organizations, consider the needs and priorities



of their public administration, and inform the scope of collaboration and partnership at the local level in the coming year.

IV. Participants

The Working Group brings together the municipalities of Upala, Los Chiles (Costa Rica); Esquipulas, Izabal (Guatemala); Choloma, San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, (Honduras); and La Chorrera, Panama City (Panama). The Working Group is also open to the participation of the focal points of the MIRPS National Technical Teams.

The tasks of the Working Group will be supported by a Panel of Advisors. The panel of advisors will be comprised of specialists suggested by the MIRPS Technical Secretariat for the consideration of the participating States and by specialists who may also be suggested by the participating States of the Working Groups.

Esquipulas, one of the two Guatemalan municipalities that participated in consultations in 2021 and signed a Cities of Solidarity agreement in 2020, assumed the Presidency of the MIRPS Local Governance Working Group for this year. The municipality shares borders with neighboring Honduras and El Salvador and plays an important role in coordinating assistance to people identified to be in need of international protection.

The municipality of Esquipulas will participate in the preparation and coordination meetings with the panel of experts, will moderate the sessions, and will share communications with all members, in coordination with the MIRPS Technical Secretariat.

V. Working Group Meetings

The Working Group will hold three substantive virtual sessions during the course of the year. In turn, the Working Group participants are expected to play an active role, providing technical input and approving recommendations for decision-making on projects and facilitating the operational implementation of the recommendations in their respective countries.

Session 1 – Global Initiatives and Frameworks on Local Governance (27 October)			
Objective: To provide a forum to ensure a common understanding of the Global Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees; the functions of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Mayors Migration Council (MMC) and the good practices developed by local governments in the context of the Global Fund for Cities Development.			
Agenda			
10.00-10.05am	Opening remarks	Municipality of Esquipulas, Guatemala	5 min



10.05-11.45am	Global Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees, from United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the Mayors Migration Council (MMC)	Speakers TBC	40 min
10.45-11.05am	Global Fund for Cities Development	Municipality TBC	20 min
11.05-11.25am	Comments, questions and answers	All participants	20 min
11.25-11.30am	Closing remarks	Municipality of Esquipulas, Guatemala	5 min

Session 2 – Cities of Solidarity (28 October)			
Objective: To provide a forum to review the Regional Framework for Cities of Solidarity, with its 10 Criteria, which define social inclusion at the local level, including the skills, capacities, and resources that must be fostered in the local public administration and social actors to guarantee effective and sustainable integration.			
Agenda			
10.00-10.05am	Opening remarks	Municipality of Esquipulas, Guatemala	5 min
10.05-10.35am	Cities of Solidarity, the 10 Criteria, and the self-assessment tool	UNHCR	30 min
10.35-10.40am	Methodology for the Group Session	MIRPS Technical Secretariat	5 min
10.40-11.10am	Group 1 - Conditions of inclusion, access to rights and urban environments	All participants / facilitators: Municipality of Esquipulas and CGLU	30 min
	Group 2 - Environment for Public Administration and Public Policies		
11.10-11.20am	Plenary Session – Comments from Groups 1 and 2	All participants	10 min
11.20-11.30am	Global Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees and Closing Remarks	Municipality of Esquipulas and CGLU	10 min

Session 3 – Roles of regional and international organizations (31 October)			
Objective: Consider the roles and support services of regional and international organizations that aim to help municipalities promote refugee protection and inclusion, based on the needs and priorities of local public administrations, to inform collaboration and local partnerships.			
Agenda			
10.00-10.05am	Opening remarks	Municipality of Esquipulas, Guatemala	5 min
10.05-10.20am	Regional Framework for Local Governance: Pillar 1: Integration of displacement in local development planning, and Pillar 2: Protection and access to essential services	UNHCR	15 min



10.20-10.35am	Regional Framework for Local Governance: Pillar 3: Rule of law and e-government, and Pillar 4: Socio-economic integration and social cohesion	UNDP	15 min
10.35-10.45am	Questions and comments	All participants	10 min
10.45-11.00am	Migration Policy and Governance	IADB (TBC)	15 min
11.00-11.15am	Study "Reception and integration of migrants and refugees in cities of the Americas"	OAS	15 min
11.15-11.25am	Questions and comments	All participants	10 min
11.25-11.30am	Closing remarks	Municipality of Esquipulas, Guatemala	5 min