

TECHNICAL REPORT

World Refugee Council

Grant No. 108759-001

Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), Canada

Reporting Period: December 2017 to July 2019

27 September 2019

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Project Synthesis

The World Refugee Council was established in May 2017 with the objective of developing innovative ideas aimed at stimulating transformative change in the way the world perceives and responds to refugees and those forcibly displaced. The WRC has the following objectives:

- 1) Facilitate new and innovative dialogue between a wide range of actors on the deficiencies and limitations of the current global refugee regime;
- 2) Identify, develop and propose approaches, mechanisms and instruments to address issues of compliance with the global refugee regime, gaps in the current regime, and political, institutional and structural challenges that limit the functioning of the regime; and
- 3) Generate the necessary political support for implementation of the Council's recommendations.

The Council hosted or co-hosted several major meetings, workshops, and site visits, engaging in intensive discussions and exchanges with host country governments, civil society, the private sector and refugees across a range of countries in the Global North and South.

On January 24th, 2019, the Council released its report [A Call to Action: Transforming the Global Refugee System](#) at the United Nations in New York City. The event was well attended and included several Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, NGOs and other stakeholders.

Since January 2019, the WRC has transitioned to the outreach, advocacy, and network building phase in which it seeks to mobilize key stakeholders to adopt its policy recommendations that will improve the global refugee and IDP systems.

As of July 31st, 2019, CIGI will no longer host the WRC. [CUSO](#) International, a charity registered in both Canada and the United States, has agreed to host the WRC on a fee-for-service basis.

Research Problem

The current international refugee system has saved millions of lives and refugees are currently protected under its existing framework. But the present refugee protection system is failing the majority of refugees and displaced persons. Notwithstanding the growing xenophobic climate in many countries, there is much that can and should be done to redress chronic finance shortfalls, major deficits of state and personal accountability, broader-based burden-sharing, global governance innovation, technological application, and violent conflict prevention and deterrence. We must realize the powerful moral, economic, political, and strategic reasons for transforming the present system.

Research Findings

Since May 2017, the WRC has worked towards developing innovative solutions to transform this system. Extensive consultations were held at various locations around the world. The WRC's report contains recommendations based on three glaring shortcomings in the present international refugee system: lack of accountability; ineffective responsibility-sharing and governance; and inadequate funding.

Accountability

Accountability is currently missing altogether at the upstream end of refugee flows where perpetrators act with impunity, often enriching themselves in the process, sometimes shielded by Security Council vetoes. Accountability is also deficient at the downstream end where many states renege on their commitments under the 1951 Convention, both through short-rationing their donations and rejecting *bona fide* refugees at their borders. Both problems must be confronted. The Council recommends developing a monitoring system based on the notion of peer-review and more effective system of adherence and compliance with international rules for states, private actors, international organizations and refugees. One of the Council's proposals that has generated a lot of attention is to freeze the assets of perpetrators and re-direct them for refugee assistance purposes, thus adding new funds and at the same time enhancing accountability by eliminating the impunity of corrupt leaders.

Responsibility Sharing and Governance

Contemporary forced displacement occurs close to or within fragile and failed states meaning that those countries legally responsible for hosting displaced populations are typically those least capable of doing so. On the other hand, those countries with the greatest ability to assist spend exorbitant sums of money on restricting access and processing the protection claims of only a small fraction of the world's displaced. Establishing equity must be a priority for a transformed global protection system. The Council endorses the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and recommends providing more support for populations of Internally Displaced Persons who fall through the cracks of the protection system.

The Council also recommends greater attention to regional policy and operational practices. This latter initiative received warm responses from regional groupings, including the African Union, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, and the United Nations Economic Commissions of Africa. The Council also recommends that for those countries confronting the simultaneous burdens of structural adjustment in the repayment of development loans and major refugee inflows, those programs be modified to promote host state development and the integration and naturalization of refugees.

Financing and Private Sector Engagement

Funding needs to match growing demand and must be more strategically conceived because the costs of responding to refugees are mounting. The refugee budget is larger, in theory if not always in practice, than the UN's regular budget and its peacekeeping budget. And yet, where countries' regular and peacekeeping budgets are assessed by agreed on formula and mandatory, the refugee budget is entirely dependent on passing the hat when refugee crises materialize. More assured and adequate funding is necessary. At the same time, there is a need to mobilize the private sector, including the financial services sector to support refugee entrepreneurs and encourage investment in refugee hosting states.

The Council developed recommendations to stabilize funding mechanisms for refugee humanitarian efforts and identified ways to develop innovative financing mechanisms, such as refugee bonds (akin to "green bonds" in climate change) and other private equity vehicles to promote growth and investment in refugee hosting states and within refugee communities that will be discussed in its report. The latter would build on emerging and frontier financial market foundations, and appeal globally both to large conventional institutions as well as social impact investors. The Council also recognizes that refugees are not simply a burden and if given the opportunity can create their own economies. Technological

applications based on the crowdfunding concept can provide displaced populations with microloans when large financial institutions are unwilling to lend. The Council will also look at ways to ease barriers to remittance transfers so refugees and families of refugees are able to send money across international borders.

These are just some of the key themes contained in the Council’s report and there are a number of immediate actions that can be taken:

- Adopting domestic legislation to enable the confiscation of frozen assets, and to re-purpose those assets for the benefit of the population of the country of origin, with special consideration for the interests of the forcibly displaced;
- Pursuing concessionary trade arrangements for the benefit of countries hosting large numbers of refugees (“host countries”) in order to ease the economic and political pressures that are created for host countries;
- Encouraging international financial institutions to accord special consideration to host countries when establishing terms for loans and investments;
- Convening and facilitating the operation of forums for private sector investors to explore and create financial instruments by which the private sector can raise money for the benefit of the forcibly displaced;
- Submitting to and participating in the multilateral reforms recommended by the Council, such as universal periodic peer review and annual assessed contributions for UNHCR; and
- Adopting and promoting practices and policies that can change the negative narrative that so frequently attaches to refugees and asylum-seekers and working with other members of the Network to advocate for a humane, balanced and honest characterization of the forcibly displaced.

Project Implementation and Management

Project Activities During Reporting Period

Since its establishment, the WRC hosted or co-hosted several major meetings, workshops, and site visits, engaging in intensive discussions and exchanges with host country governments, civil society, the private sector and refugees across a range of countries in the Global North and South.

A complete summary is presented in the table below (includes activities not funded by IDRC):

Table 1: WRC Meetings, Workshops and Site Visits

WRC Meetings	Workshops	Site Visits	Report Launch Events
Switzerland (June 2017)	<i>Symposium on Refugees and Responsibility Sharing</i> Washington, DC, USA (April 2018)	Colombia * (July 2018)	Ethiopia (January 2019)
Jordan (September 2017)	<i>The Exodus Institute Symposium on Internal Displacement</i>	Uganda (November 2017)	New York City * (January 2019)

	Washington, DC, USA (May 2018)		
Germany (November 2017)	<i>Innovative Financing Mechanisms for the “Age of Refugees”</i> Washington, DC, USA (May 2018)	Ethiopia (February 2018)	Geneva (April 2019)
Tanzania * (February 2018)	<i>The Role of Technology in Addressing the Global Migration Crisis</i> San Francisco, USA (June 2018)	Myanmar & Bangladesh (August 2018)	Ottawa (April 2019)
Greece * (July 2018)	<i>Mass Displacement in Ongoing Conflicts: Myanmar and South Sudan</i> New York City, USA (June 2018)		Berlin (June 2019)
			London (June 2019)

*IDRC funds supported participation of Global South councillors.

Members of the WRC formally launched its report at the United Nations headquarters. Councillors met to discuss a plan of action for realizing the recommendations into action and galvanizing support for the calls to action by leveraging existing relationships and fostering partnerships. Permanent Representatives to the UN and other key stakeholders from civil society, international organizations, and academia were invited to the official launch hosted at the UN. Members of the WRC arranged meetings with the UNHCR, the UNDP, and During the launch, WRC members also held an event at the New School’s Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility, led by former UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Alexander Aleinikoff, to discuss the report’s findings and recommendations. The IDRC grant supported the participation of WRC Global South members.

Ahead of the official launch at the UN, members of the WRC, including two councillors from the Global South, held a soft launch in Addis Ababa. They met with leaders and officials from the African Union (AU), other country ambassadors and representatives, and civil society groups. The delegation selected relevant recommendations from the Council’s report and presented them to officials and representatives in Addis. The intention behind the trip was to reconnect with officials the WRC had meet with in Addis during its 2018 visit and to provide them with advanced copies of the report. African countries will be key partners for the WRC and its Global Action Network in bringing transformative change to the global protection system for refugees and IDPs. The IDRC grant supported the participation of WRC Global South members.

IDRC’s grant also supported work on the WRC’s call for innovative financing solutions. Two WRC advisors participated in the Global Private Equity Conference, a conference hosted by the International Finance Corporation in association with the Emerging Markets Private Equity Association in Washington on May 13-15, 2019. Our experts met with investors and key actors related to possible innovative financing opportunities to assist host developing countries with the cost of dealing with refugee issues. A detailed report of the outcomes of these meetings and recommendations for next steps was prepared.

The table below presents the details of how IDRC funds were used between December 2017 and July 2019:

Table 2: Budget

Item	Budget	Spend (Dec. 2017-July 2019)
Commissioned Research	\$20,000	\$51,010
Travel Costs	\$210,940	\$43,859
Research Workshops	\$69,060	\$0
TOTAL	\$300.000	\$94,869

Research Methods and Techniques

The WRC met with key policymakers and government representatives, including parliamentarians and senators from countries hosting and/or resettling refugees. These meetings and consultations helped inform the WRC's recommendations and calls to action contained within its report. The commissioned research papers also informed the findings in the report.

Project Management

I. Project Administration

Since December 2017, there were a couple of WRC staffing changes. First, an additional Research Associate was added to the team to support the completion of the report. Secondly, the WRC project manager began parental leave in June 2017 and an interim manager took over WRC project management duties until July 2019.

As of August 1st, 2019, the WRC will be managed by CUSO International.

II. Project Schedule

CUSO will be submitting project schedule for the next phase of WRC.

Project Outputs and Dissemination

Project Outputs

In addition to the WRC report, several research papers were commissioned to cover specific areas of importance and to inform the WRC report.

Below is a list of commissioned research papers supported by IDRC (published material is hyperlinked):

Commissioned Research Papers Supported by IDRC

[Mobilizing Political Will for Refugee Protection and Solutions: A Framework for Analysis and Action](#)

Jeff Crisp

[Refugees and the City: The Twenty-first-century Front Line](#)

Robert Muggah and Adriana Erthal Abdenur

[From Rhetoric to Reality: Achieving Gender Equality for Refugee Women and Girls](#)

Eileen Pittaway and Linda Bertolomei

[Assessing the Impacts of Hosting Refugees](#)

Sarah Deardorff Miller

[Xenophobia toward Refugees and Other Forced Migrants](#)

Sarah Deardorff Miller

[Using the Compact Model to Support Host States and Refugee Self-reliance](#)

Nazanin Ash and Cindy Huang

[“Call Me a Business Owner, Not a Refugee!” Challenges of and Perspectives on Newcomer Entrepreneurship](#)

Lubna Rashid

[No Strangers at the Gate: Collective Responsibility and a Region’s Response to the Venezuelan Refugee and Migration Crisis](#)

Michael Camilleri and Fen Osler Hampson

[Refugee Voices](#)

Will Jones

[Durable Solutions for Refugees](#)

Megan Bradley

[Innovative Governance for IDPs](#)

Walter Kaelin

[Innovations in Responsibility Sharing](#)

Tristan Harley

[UN Systemwide Coherence](#)

Sarah Deardorff Miller

[Enforcement, Accountability and Culpability](#)

Phil Orchard

Other WRC Publications

[Keeping the Promise: Three Proposed Accountability Mechanisms for the Global Refugee Regime](#)

Andrew Thompson

[Using Frozen Assets to Assist the Forcibly Displaced: A Policy Proposal for Canada](#)

Allan Rock, with the assistance of students Kirsten Aleksejev, Zaynab Al-Waadh, Ghannia Bokharia, Jiwon Chun, Christina Clemente, Paul Ethans, Shannon Kristjanson, Andrew Mortenson, Katelyn Perry, and Nika Shaeri

[Harnessing Trade Law to Support Refugees and Host Countries](#)

Lawrence L. Herman

[Data Protection and Digital Agency of Refugees](#)

Dragan Kaurin

[Digital Developments: Harbingers of Humanitarian Change?](#)

Carleen Maitland

[Global Governance](#)

Alexander Betts and James Milner

[Opportunities and Challenges of Emerging Technologies for the Refugee System](#)

Roya Pakzad

Refugee Youth

Bushra Ebadi

Dissemination

CIGI promoted all of the research papers on social media and all of them are available on the WRC [website](#). In addition, the WRC and CIGI engaged in an ambitious social media campaign to produce videos, infographics, and articles.

Below is a summary of the WRC report dissemination activities:

- January 2019:

- Pre-launch of report in Addis, Ababa with African Union and civil society
- Report launch at UN Headquarters in NYC
- Report event at The New School in NYC
- April 2019:
 - Report launch event at IDRC and Parliament Hill, Ottawa
 - Report launch event in Geneva
- June 2019:
 - Report launch event in London
 - Report launch event in Berlin

Impact and Conclusion

A Call to Action was well received by national and international media. Below is a summary of the coverage that the report received:

- **175 million** online impressions from **311** articles in **23** countries
- Prominent **TV and radio** coverage, including **hourly coverage** on CBC News Network, CTV News Channel and CBC Radio 1 throughout the day of the launch, a live segment on BBC World News at 10 pm ET, and coverage on CTV National News
- In addition to the WRC, CIGI was mentioned in **42% of unique Tier 1 media hits**, including BBC World News, CBC, CTV, *Washington Post*, *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star* and more

Below is a summary of the social media coverage of the report launch:

- The WRC launch video received more than **500K views** on YouTube and Twitter
- The WRC Twitter chat with council members and CIGI experts **trended #3 nationwide**, with participation from several founders and directors of refugee support programs and organizations
- On Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, WRC content alone brought in over **600K impressions** and **50K engagements** during the launch
- Social media support came from several notable **high-profile** representatives, including UN Rep Marc-Andre Blanchard, TBS Canada's Adam Moscoe and UNHCR Canada Rep Jean-Nicolas Beuze

Moving forward, under the management of CUSO, the WRC will work to secure commitments from government, civil society, and private sector actors, as it relates to its calls to action.

Members of the WRC have informed CIGI that they hope that IDRC will readily reposition the remaining, unspent funds from CIGI to CUSO in order to allow the WRC in partnership with CUSO to work on promoting and implementing some of the key recommendations that are contained in its report. CIGI takes no position on the question of IDRC repositioning the remaining unspent funds to CUSO. CIGI stands ready to answer any specific questions IDRC might have that are not addressed in this report.