



After Action Review: Global Refugee Forum ECD Task Team Report

Overview:

The Global Refugee Forum (GRF) facilitates the announcement of concrete pledges and contributions, and considers opportunities, challenges, and ways in which burden- and responsibility-sharing in support of the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) can be enhanced.

The [2023 Forum](#) built on progress made by States and stakeholders towards the implementation of the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) and the related [pledges](#) and [initiatives](#) announced since the [first Forum in 2019](#). In 2023, over 1,600 pledges were made with an estimated USD 2.2 billion in financial commitments. Around 40% of pledges referenced education. The 2023 Forum took place in Geneva between December 13-15, 2023, with side events on December 12, including the Education Alliance Education Campus. It was co-convened by Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan, and Uganda, and co-hosted by Switzerland and UNHCR.

Recognising the importance of education as an essential component in building strong, resilient communities and supporting the holistic development of children and youth, the [UNHCR GRF Education Alliance](#) formed as part of the first GRF and brings together a range of stakeholders working to advance education for refugees and displaced children and youth.

In 2023, the Education Alliance convened a number of thematic task teams to help put a spotlight on issues of importance related to the delivery and quality of education at all levels for refugees and internally displaced children and youth, and the communities that host them. This included an Early Childhood Education (ECE) Task Team (TT). The ECE TT members agreed that the focus of the TT would not only be ECE, but also include holistic early childhood development starting at birth, defined as nurturing care which includes components of early and playful learning, responsive parenting, good health (including mental health) and nutrition and safety and security. This meant that the Early Childhood Development (ECD) TT both sat within the UNHCR Education Alliance, but also strove to influence other sectors/priority areas, including gender, child rights and SEL-MHPSS, recognizing the multi-sectoral nature of ECD. The 2023 GRF was recognized as an opportunity to raise awareness and urge decision makers to pledge policy, programmatic and financial commitments to accelerate access to nurturing care interventions in families and communities, and in informal and formal pre-primary education settings.

Process:

The overall roles of the Education Alliance task teams were to:

- Identify and share evidence-based good practices that showcase the implementation of GRF pledges and inspire commitment ahead of the 2023 GRF.
- Develop and operationalize joint proposals for GRF side events.
- Advocate for the development of compact and matched pledges.

The ECD TT leaders were MMA, Lego Foundation and BVLf, with support from UNHCR. TT members included representatives from Amal Alliance, AMNA, Bernard Van Leer Foundation, BRAC IED/International, Children Believe, Early Childhood Development Action Network, Global Initiative to Support Parents, Hilton Foundation, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, iACT, International Rescue Committee, LEGO Foundation, Moving Minds Alliance, Plan International, Refugee Innovation Centre, Save the Children UK, Seedling Education, Sesame Workshop, UNHCR, UNICEF, University of Virginia, War Child UK, World Vision Canada.

Broad objectives for the ECD TT were:

1. Inform the recommendations being developed by our counterparts across the range of Education Alliance Task Teams and other sector initiatives to ensure that nurturing care is meaningfully integrated and prioritized.
2. Socialize our joint policy asks and raise awareness amongst Global Refugee Forum participants and decision makers about the growing and unmet need for ECD, as well as promising practices to mainstream nurturing care.
3. Develop a Multistakeholder Pledge for ECD and mobilize SMART multistakeholder pledges, that bring together concrete commitments and investments toward nurturing care from donors, Ministries, foundations and implementing partners.

Priority areas of work to advance these objectives were identified and sub working groups established:

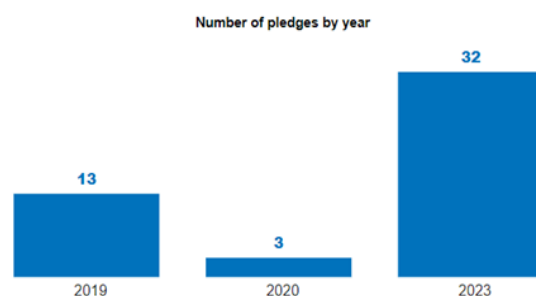
- ECD exhibition space (led by Sesame Workshop and BRAC)
- ECD Roadmap/manifesto (led by MMA/consultant)
- ECD event (led by WarChild UK)
- Joint Country pledges (led by UNICEF)
- Joint Global pledge (led by Plan International and UNICEF)
- Influencing other pledges on ECD (led by UNICEF, International Rescue Committee, MMA)

The ECD TT and sub groups met regularly during 2023. The purpose of this After Action Review is to capture achievements, challenges, lessons learned and recommendations, particularly based on a meeting held in March 2023 to harvest reflections from TT members.

Key Outcomes and Achievements:

The GRF is a complex and fluid space to work in, and many TT members were on a very steep learning curve, as well as juggling multiple other commitments both inside and outside of the GRF. Despite this, key successes identified included:

- Development and finalization of the ECD multi-stakeholder pledge, including uploading onto the UNHCR website – good collaboration and coordination meant the pledge got wide support from TT members.
- Incorporation of feedback on the pledge from an MMA-led consultation with local ECD actors working on the Ukraine response.
- Socialization of ECD pledge through different channels/with different stakeholders (e.g. webinar, governments/donors, national ECD actors). This included specific engagement with governments (UK, Germany, Netherlands), CSOs (Colombia, Uganda, Jordan, Ethiopia, Bangladesh), the Refugee Advisory Board of the GRF and UNHCR.
- A keyword search for ‘early childhood’ (May 2024) in the UNHCR [pledge database](#) brings up 48 total pledges, with the majority of ECD-related pledges being made in 2023.



- Development of ECD national pledges from civil society in Uganda and Colombia, based on the ECD multistakeholder pledge.
- A number of ECD pledges were made by MMA and some MMA members, to advance ECD and ECDiE for refugee/displaced children, their caregivers and host communities.
- Participation of ECD TT members in other TT e.g. MHPSS-SEL, child rights initiative, localization, meant there were opportunities to make linkages/build alignment with ECD and socialize relevant parts of the ECD pledge.
- The ECD event at the Education Campus was a success, demonstrating good collaboration and leveraging of connections/contacts across the sub-group members. The panel was diverse and representative, including a youth advocate, refugees, foundations, government, community-based organization. Also included a video and audience interaction/questions. The event enabled connection with other actors.
- Recognition of the effective functioning of the TT overall with good organization, collaboration, connections, networking, transparency, opportunities for new partnerships etc. The TT was able to play to each member’s strengths. This will also be useful for ongoing collaboration and future work. The regular meetings, updates and collaboration spaces e.g. google folder/documents were appreciated and used.
- Recognition of efforts to connect with refugee-led organizations.
- Shared commitment to ECDiE in the GRF and beyond solidified.
- GRF highlighted how well-organized MMA is, and the importance of the network overall, with members working well together.

Challenges:

- Overall, the pledging process was difficult to understand with lack of clarity around different kinds of pledges, related processes, and timing.
- Were not able to get a donor/government to back the ECD pledge. Feedback from governments included that the ECD pledge was too early, too late, they had other priorities, or was too complicated because it was cross-cutting/multi-sectoral. Decisions on GRF commitments were in some cases being made 6+ months ahead of the GRF, so a long lead time was needed. It was challenging to engage and reach potential decision makers in governments and donors.
- The ECD event organizers at the Education Campus had to manage a lot of last minute changes, challenges and requests (including speakers not being able to attend due to visa issues). Recognizing the event as important, but only able to scratch the surface in the time available for the panel, the audience was small, there were a lot of competing events, and were largely preaching to the converted.
- A lot of time and effort was put into the GRF, multiple TTs and related processes by many people. However, this didn't necessarily translate into concrete actions or outcomes.
- It was difficult/challenging to work with UNHCR with lack of clarity, internal confusion within the organization etc. and hard to get their support for prioritizing ECDiE given competing demands. UNHCR didn't help enough with connections to relevant governments. Also not enough guidance/timely information on the organization of the Education Campus events, so a lot of time was spent chasing them up.
- Working effectively within the Education Alliance was challenging, with too many competing priorities and task teams. Breaking education down into secondary education, education, ECE, EiE, MHPSS-SEL etc. was too much detail for most governments/donors and meant there was high potential for duplication i.e. TTs reaching out to governments on different education-related pledges with limited to no coordination.
- We're not able to get an ECD side event or panelist within the GRF itself, despite advocating with UNHCR for this.
- Reduced space for civil society within the 2023 GRF overall.

Lessons Learned and Reflections:

- Need to take a long-term view of the GRF. This means that we need to build commitment and momentum in key countries, and get government and donor support for the ECD pledge leading up to the GRF midpoint and next GRF.
- Need to target specific governments where there is interest and potential links e.g. UK/FCDO are committed to education and GBV and have been supporting ECE in emergencies. Initial discussions with UK/FCDO in 2023 can be further leveraged. Important to continue to make the links between ECD/ECE and GBV; Netherlands are committed to MHPSS so need to make links between MHPSS, caregiver well being/caring for the caregivers and ECD.
- Recognition that the issues/thematic areas that had success in terms of advancing their agenda had substantial engagement with Geneva based missions, including people on the ground in Geneva.
- The GRF exhibition space is important and strategic. A lot of good discussions, interactions and networking happened there, so should ensure ECD is more visible in this space in future.
- Overall concern on time spent vs outcomes.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

- Further explore opportunities to include ECD as an add on to other pledges.
- Begin work from now with engaging UNHCR and 2-3 governments and donors who could lead with us on ECDiE within the GCR/GRF.
- Identify internal advocates within governments/donors to push the ECD pledge.
- Identify who within UNHCR we need to influence/target for support on ECD within GRF processes.
- Consider resourcing a Geneva-based ECD advocate and networker for the next GRF, recognising that having someone on the ground in Geneva is valuable, including to engage with Geneva based missions, raise the profile of the ECD pledge and to build connections across thematic areas.
- Consider incorporating a go/no go step - this would enable assessment of whether or not efforts to advance ECDiE within the GRF are advancing or not at a particular point in time, for re-evaluation of time/resource investment.
- Identify and elevate the voices and experiences of parents and children for ECDiE – beyond representation in events but harnessing their experience/expertise on an ongoing basis and in strategic ways.
- Ensure there is a communications plan and strategy to support GRF work – we need to work more closely with UNHCR and communications colleagues for the next GRF, this includes to publicize the ECD pledge and related events, exhibition space, and to advance other advocacy activities.
- At future GRFs, invest more time and resources into the exhibition space for greater visibility and networking opportunities.
- MMA to track member GRF pledges. One MMA pledge was to hold members accountable. MMA will be asking members to report regularly on the progress of their pledges before the next GRF and will publish an update on the MMA website.
- The materials developed for the GRF e.g. pledge, case for support, to be used in future global and regional advocacy e.g. upcoming regional ECD network conferences, Summit of the Future, other global moments. Advocacy moments and events should be leveraged to advance ECDiE for refugee and displaced children and caregivers.
- The ECD TT will not continue in its current form, due to lack of interest from UNHCR to support, and lack of time/capacity from members to take it forward. It is also recognized that the continuation of the TT would create duplication with the work of MMA. Most of the members of the TT are already members of MMA and operating in different working groups of MMA. Where TT members are not current MMA members, they will be invited to join MMA.

Appendix 1: Jamboard capturing ECD TT reflections

Thinking about the GRF and the ECD taskteam - what worked well?



What were our main achievements?



What were the challenges?



Thinking ahead to the next GRF (and the GRF midpoint), what could we do differently/better?



Appendix 2 – Resource and links to key documents

- ECD Task Team folder: [Here](#)
- ECD multistakeholder pledge ([UNHCR website](#)) - short version
- ECD multistakeholder pledge (MMA website) – short and long version: [Here](#)
- MMA member pledges tracking [spreadsheet](#)
- UNHCR GRF Pledge: [Microsoft Power BI database](#) (search pledges box: early childhood)

Acknowledgments:

This report was compiled by Nicole Rodger, Policy and Advocacy Lead for ECD, Plan International, on behalf of the GRF ECD Task Team. Reviewed by Nour Jarrouj, Senior Engagement Manager (Advocacy), Moving Minds Alliance.