

# CONSULTATION REPORT

## MENA REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON REFUGEE PRIORITIES FOR THE GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM 2023

November 2023

## MENA Regional Consultation for the second Global Refugee Forum

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**Background:** [The Refugee Council of Turkiye](#) (TMK) and the [Global Refugee-Led Network](#) (GRN) MENA Chapter convened a regional consultation on refugee priorities ahead of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), which will take place in Geneva from 13-15 December 2023, to ensure that the perspectives of refugees and host communities are reflected in the discussions at the GRF and that the policy priorities are rooted in the priorities and needs of affected communities.

**Methodology:** The regional consultation process included two phases: an online survey and a consultation meeting that was held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The consultation survey, designed to provide a snapshot of views on the issues facing refugees and recommendations to address them was launched in four languages (Arabic, Turkish, English and French) and was available between 13 and 30 October 2023. The survey questions aimed to understand respondents' views on priority policy areas that negatively impact refugees, the issues that are least well addressed by national governments and international policymakers, proposed solutions to address these issues, and respondents' engagement in the GRF. The consultation survey was shared with more than 400 civil society organizations, as a result of our mapping and outreach efforts. Survey results were used to shape the agenda of the consultation meeting.

A total of 79 individuals responded to the survey. Respondents were representing local/national organisations (37), refugee-led organisations (30), women's organisations (7), INGOs (7) and other types of organisations (4). Majority were based in Turkiye (44 respondents), but also one third of respondents (29) were based in one of the 10 MENA countries (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates).

### Key findings on refugee priorities

According to the survey respondents, **protection against involuntary return** was the most frequently cited issue. **Xenophobia and discrimination** ranked as the second, and **recognition of legal status and access to relevant documents** ranked as the third most important issue concerning refugees in the region. Other policy areas included access to basic services (22,8%), legal employment (17,7%), safe and dignified working conditions (11,4%), and education (15,2%); addressing root causes (16,5%), access to durable solutions (local integration, resettlement and voluntary return) (15,2%), and the ability to cross international borders to seek safety (17,7%); the ability to claim asylum in the country of residence (15,2%); and social cohesion with host communities (12,7%).

Table 1: Most important policy areas that are negatively impacting refugees

Policy Areas	%
1 Protection against involuntary or forced return, or refoulement	34,2
2 Xenophobia and discrimination	25,3
3 Recognition of legal status and access to relevant	24,1
4 Access to services that meet essential needs	22,8
5 Access to legal employment opportunities	17,7
6 Ability to cross international borders	17,7
7 Addressing root causes of displacement	16,5

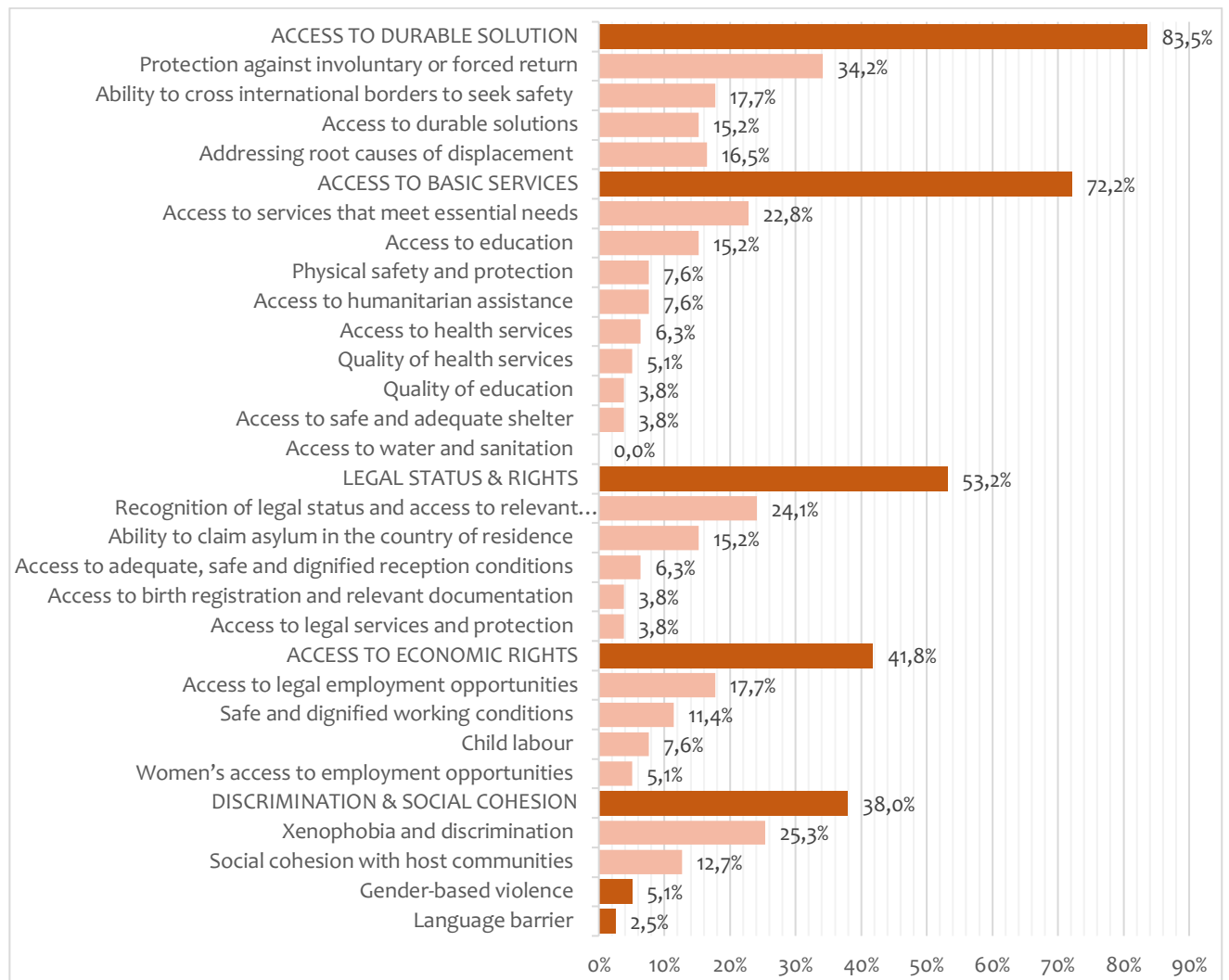
8	Access to durable solutions	15,2
9	Ability to claim asylum in the country of residence	15,2
10	Access to education	15,2
11	Social cohesion and harmony with host communities	12,7
12	Safe and dignified working conditions	11,4
Number of respondents		79

Source: Consultation Survey

Question: What are the three most important policy areas that are negatively impacting refugees and need improvement in the country in which you work or are based?

When these issues are grouped together to better understand the key priority areas, the issues identified by the respondents center around 5 main themes: 1. Access to durable solutions; 2. Access to basic services; 3. Access to legal status and rights; 4. Access to economic rights; and 5. Discrimination and social cohesion.

Figure 1: Main policy areas that are negatively impacting refugees



The majority of respondents (83,5%) cited **access to durable solutions**, including protection against involuntary return, the ability to cross international borders to seek safety, and addressing root causes, as one of the most important issues currently facing refugees in the region. Notably, access to durable solutions was noted as an important issue to the same extent by respondents based in Türkiye and other MENA countries, as well as by respondents from refugee-led and local/ national organisations, suggesting the importance of addressing this issue in the face of protracted displacement in the region.

Figure 2: Main policy areas that are negatively impacting refugees, by country

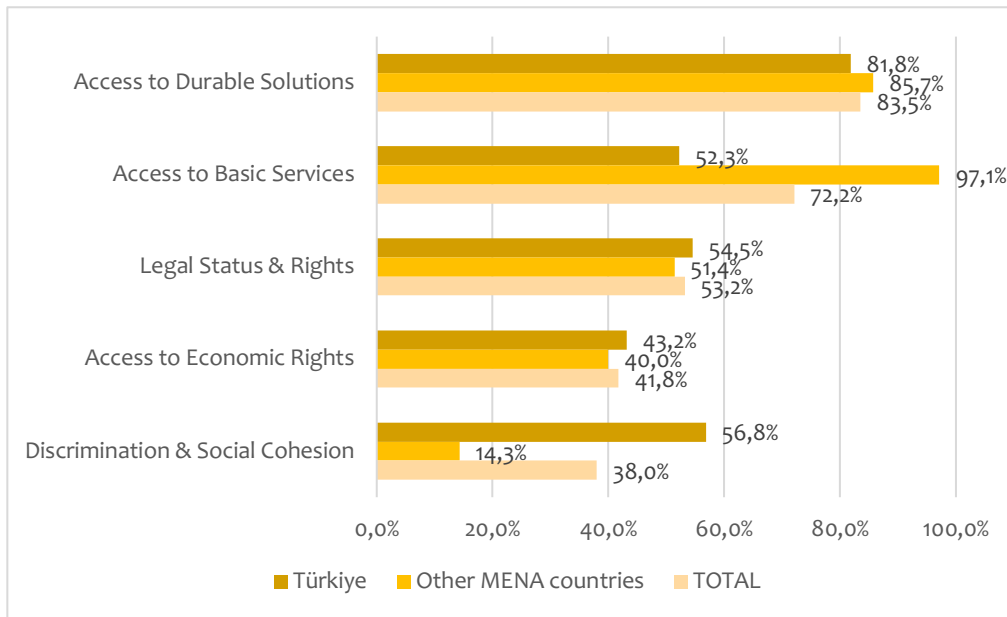
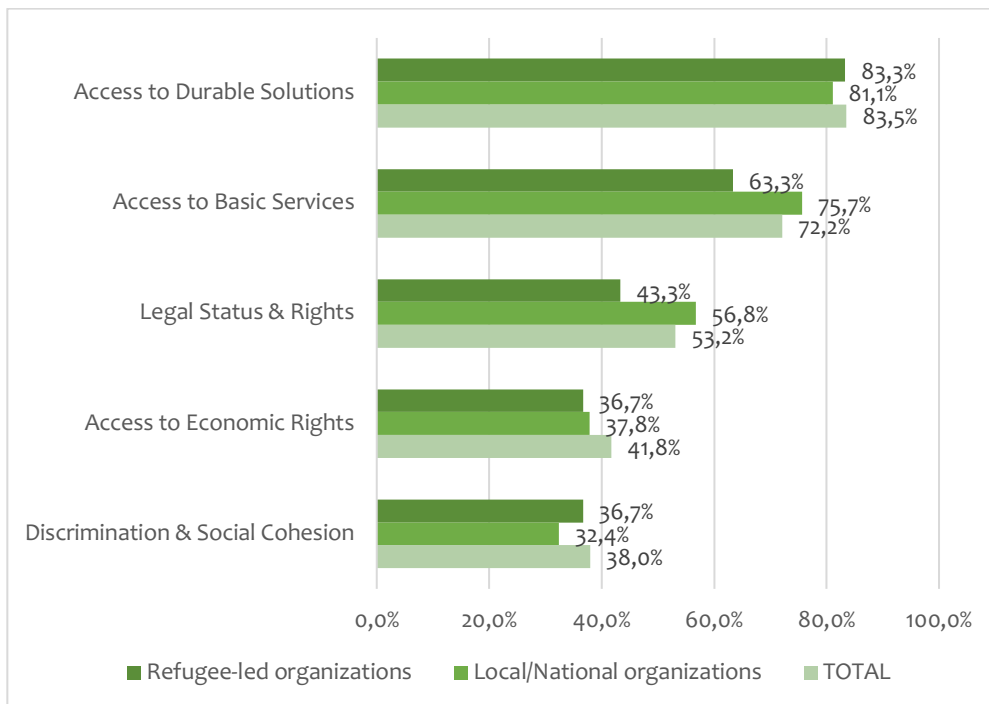


Figure 3: Main policy areas that are negatively impacting refugees, by type of organisation



**Access to basic services**, including access to essential needs, education, health, shelter and protection also appears to be one of the most important refugee issues from the perspective of survey respondents (72,2%). It was mentioned more often by respondents based in other MENA countries (97,1%) compared to those based in Turkiye (52,3%); and by respondents from local/national organisations (75,7%) compared to refugee-led organisations (63,3%).

Half of the respondents indicated **legal status and access to legal rights** as one of the important policy areas, making it the third most-cited issue in this survey. The issue includes the ability to claim asylum, access to dignified reception conditions, registration and relevant documents, and legal services. Respondents from local/national organisations (56,8%) were more likely to flag access to legal status and rights as an important issue compared to refugee-led organisations (43,3%). In parallel, over a third of respondents cited **access to economic rights** (41,8%). Respondents based in both Turkiye and other countries identified access to legal rights and economic rights to the same extent.

The issue of **discrimination and social cohesion** was cited by a third of respondents as an important issue to tackle (38%). It was more often cited by respondents based in Turkiye (56,8%) than in other countries (14,3%).

The **issues that are least well addressed** by national governments and international policymakers appear to be parallel to the five priority policy areas mentioned above:

- The root causes of displacement were strongly emphasized by the respondents;
- Inclusiveness of services and access to funding were additional aspects of access to basic services mentioned;
- Under access to legal status and rights, respondents also mentioned right to travel and the efficiency of status determination.

In addition to the priority policy areas identified above, international responsibility sharing, solidarity and international cooperation; and refugee participation were indicated both as the least well addressed issues and as ways to better address them. Other issues stated include lack of accountability and stability, lack of long-term policies and multi-country strategies.

Ways suggested by respondents to ensure that these priorities are better addressed include conducting **advocacy** and **monitoring** activities, **raising awareness**, developing **long-term / holistic** policies and multi-sectoral/cross-cutting interventions involving national governments, international organizations, and civil society, promoting **localization** of the aid agenda (funding to local actors; participation of refugees and local NGOs in decision making processes).

In order to address the **root causes of displacement**, dialogue, diplomatic efforts, conducting negotiations with all parties involved, and advocacy with decision makers were mentioned. The importance of the role of women in peacebuilding was also mentioned by one respondent. To address **discrimination**, respondents suggested community integration programs, anti-discrimination legislation, and awareness-raising to influence public opinion and government policies. To promote access to rights and services, respondents highlighted the importance of strengthening legal frameworks and judicial systems, monitoring the implementation of laws; simplifying and streamlining registration procedures, and investing in and implementing development programmes in refugee hosting countries and countries of origin.

## Findings on the engagement in the Global Refugee Forum

According to the analysis of the survey results, the majority of the respondents had been engaged or planned to engage in the GRF at least to some extent at the time of the survey. Attending meetings/consultations (77,4%) was the main form of engagement, followed by advocacy (66%) and discussions with government (40,3%). Submitting written contributions (24,2%) and drafting policy documents (22,6%) were cited to a lesser extent. Representatives of local/national organisations were more likely to report their engagement through consultations and developing policy documents (86,2% and 31% respectively) than respondents from refugee-led organisations (65,2% and 17,4% respectively).

Table 2: Engagement in the Global Refugee Forum

Means of engagement		Total	Refugee - led	Local/ national
1	Attending meetings/consultations	77,4%	65,2%	86,2%
2	Participating in advocacy activities	66,1%	78,3%	62,1%
3	Discussing with national	40,3%	34,8%	37,9%
4	Sending written contributions	24,2%	21,7%	27,6%
5	Producing policy documents	22,6%	17,4%	31,0%
Number of respondents		62	23	30

Source: Consultation Survey

Question: Are you or your organization engaged or planning to engage in the Global Refugee Forum being organized by UNHCR between 13-15 December 2023? If yes, in what ways?

Respondents who have not engaged in the GRF process often expressed not being informed about the GRF or not being invited to take part as reasons for not having engaged in it. A few indicated that they have not engaged due to lack of financial resources.