



Bridging the compacts: roundtable discussion on investing in city leadership for migrant and refugee socio-economic inclusion

Side event of the International Migration Review Forum

Date: Thursday 7 May 2026

Time: 1:00pm – 3:00pm ET

Location: International Rescue Committee, 14th Floor, 122 E 42nd St, New York, NY
(event registration required to access the building)

Hosts: Women's Refugee Commission, International Institute for Environment and Development, Refugees International

[Register here by 5PM ET Monday 4 May](#)

**Light lunch and networking between 1:00pm - 1:30pm*

Background

As global displacement and migration reach record levels, the majority of refugees and internally displaced people are no longer living in camps, but are settling in urban and peri-urban areas. Meanwhile, 19% of the world's foreign-born population is estimated to live in global or world cities. This shift reflects a broader demographic trend to which humanitarian and development systems have yet to adapt. Municipal governments are responding to the day-to-day needs of ever greater numbers of migrants and forcibly displaced individuals settling in urban areas. Yet there is often a disconnect between national funding objectives and municipal requirements, and an absence of locally appropriate policies and programmes. In addition, the distinctions between 'migrants' and 'forcibly displaced people' are often blurred, and individuals with different status share similar challenges. This session, which bridges the policy gap between institutions working on migration and those working on forced displacement, is thus particularly timely.

Building upon an event titled "City leadership for refugee socio-economic inclusion" at the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review in December 2025, this private roundtable discussion seeks to explore complementarities between the Global Compacts on Migration and on Refugees by assessing progress in advancing city-led approaches to migration and forced displacement. The roundtable will identify strategies to enhance urban responses that enable the protection and socio-economic inclusion of mobile and displaced populations. Experts will identify crucial funding mechanisms, essential policy adjustments, and necessary operational shifts required to support innovative urban approaches, concurrently strengthening collaborative frameworks among humanitarian and development actors, local and national governance bodies, public and private donors, and displaced communities themselves.

This roundtable will seek to advance GCM Objective 15 (provide access to basic services for migrants) and Objective 16 (empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion), by exploring how multilateral development banks, national governments, and global humanitarian and development actors can strengthen partnerships with municipal authorities and urban civil society, empowering them to invest in policies, services, and infrastructure that address the unique vulnerabilities of migrants and forcibly displaced communities living in urban spaces. By adopting cohesive, city-based approaches that equitably target these populations, actors can contribute to the implementation of these two Objectives, by protecting the human rights of both migrants and forcibly displaced communities, and ensuring their access to basic services, their socio-economic inclusion and integration into host communities, and long-term self-reliance and wellbeing.

Objectives

This in-person event will connect key stakeholders working on financing, municipal leadership, humanitarian/development response, and migrant and forcibly displaced civil society leadership. All participants will be invited to engage in a rich, multistakeholder roundtable discussion following initial expert panel interventions. The expert panel intervention and following roundtable discussion will aim to:

- Explore complementarities between the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration on city-based responses to protection and inclusion for displaced populations
- Highlight the lived realities and policy challenges faced by cities hosting large displaced and migrant populations.
- Explore the tensions and gaps between national mandates and municipal responsibilities.
- Define a clearer, more constructive role for donors (including multilateral development banks), UN agencies, national governments, and humanitarian/development actors in supporting cities.
- Unpack strategies to advance protection, socio-economic inclusion, and self-reliance and wellbeing in an urban setting.
- Identify actionable recommendations to increase resources, services, and protections for displaced populations in urban settings.

Panel and agenda

Panelists and discussants will include:

- Kellie Leeson, Vice President Programs, Women's Refugee Commission (Moderator)
- Lucy Earle, Director, Human Settlements, International Institute for Environment and Development
- Martha Guerrero Ble, Advocate, Refugees International
- Sharmeen Hossein, City Finance Lead, Mayors Migration Council
- Representative from Local Coalition for Migrants and Refugees (TBC)
- Representatives from co-sponsoring Permanent Missions (TBC)

1:00 - 1:30

Light lunch and networking

1:30 - 1:40	Moderator welcome
1:40 - 2:15	Panel interventions
2:15 - 2:55	Roundtable discussion
2:55 - 3:00	Closing remarks