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ACT FOR PEACE
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THROUGH THE OCCASION



BRINGING YOU A MESSAGE FROM THE FIELD

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There are more than one million stateless Rohingya refugees who have fled violence in Myanmar in successive waves for decades. The majority fled Myanmar in 2017 following mass atrocities that have been characterised as ethnic cleansing. Of the Rohingya that have fled, 90% are now living in challenging conditions in refugee camps in Bangladesh, and no solutions are currently in sight.

Brian and the strategic engagement team are working on advocacy for the Rohingya refugee crisis. Act for Peace report 'An Agenda for a Dignified and Sustainable Rohingya Refugee Response in Bangladesh' is one example of how this work is contributing to changing practices. Thanks to your gifts and with the support of the Australian Government through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP), this work is possible.

"Act for Peace doesn't need to be the headliner or take the front seat. We know our partners have great capacity and our job is to facilitate and to step back where necessary, and that culture is very strong at Act for Peace."
Brian Barbour

PLEASE PRAY:



- For all actors in the Global Refugee Forum as they continue their work towards pledges made in 2019.
- For refugees who are leading the way to meaningful participation.
- For Brian and the strategic team, to continue their work and support for those that need it most through advocacy.

Dear Friends,

My name is Brian Barbour and I'm a Senior Refugee Protection Advisor with Act for Peace. I'm a lawyer, but before that I taught English in Japan and Nepal, and early on in life my primary goal was to explore the world, which I have been fortunate enough to do. These experiences have shaped my passion and direction working with Act for Peace.

I am part of the strategic engagement team; we focus on advocacy, capacity development and thought leadership on issues that are currently being debated. We make choices based on where we can make an impact. We can make decisions like this because we have strong relationships with our partners, government officials and international institutions. One of the great strengths of Act for Peace is that a lot of our work is about supporting the good work of others and not trying to go in and do things ourselves.

Currently underpinning all our work are the pledges made by Act for Peace at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019. This forum was a way to get commitments from various actors, including governments, to progress things and make improvements.

One of the key pledges is supporting the meaningful participation of refugees in operations, coordination and decision making. This pledge has been initiated primarily by refugees themselves, starting around the slogan of "nothing about us without us," which has been a strong rallying call to action. It is because of the hard work of a lot of refugees themselves that this was on the agenda at the Global Refugee Forum, and that it was incorporated into the Global Compact on Refugees.

So, what is meaningful participation? In many contexts, there has been a tendency to consider refugees as passive recipients of aid, however, this has never been the reality. While refugees may often be marginalised, denied a seat at the table, denied work rights, and restricted to detention centres or camps, even in the most challenging situations, refugees have always found ways of supporting each other and members of the host community. Refugees are usually the most front-line actors in a protection response. There is a lot of work now trying to recognise and shift power dynamics. This is an important part of meaningful participation; becoming aware, acknowledging, and then acting on what are usually more 'invisible' forms of exclusion.

The importance of this was recognised by States as they adopted a new Global Compact for Refugees and Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration in 2018. There is now a strong State commitment, and there is an expectation that all governments will follow through on that commitment to ensure the meaningful participation of refugees. This doesn't mean that meaningful participation is an entirely new idea. Many of the drafters of the refugee Convention and other human rights Conventions were refugees, and the first High Commissioner of UNHCR was a refugee.

Meaningful participation also means we treat collaboration as a fundamental principle, a non-negotiable, even when it's hard to engage with each other, we must find a way. We try to come with a commitment to that principle and with a sense of humility. We don't go in and tell people what they need to do. They tell us what they need to do, then we try to help them do that and to remove whatever barriers we can and provide whatever support we can.

At Act for Peace, we have a lot of freedom to determine what would really make a difference. We recognise that Act for Peace doesn't need to be the headliner or take the front seat. We know our partners have great capacity and our job is to facilitate and to step back where necessary, and that culture is very strong at Act for Peace. That's another reason I feel quite proud to work with Act for Peace.

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Brian