# Meaningful Refugee Participation Guidelines

Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network

## Rights-based Principles and Commitments

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## About the Guidelines

These Guidelines were developed by APRRN as part of its ongoing transformational journey to strengthen and improve meaningful refugee participation within APRRN. Two documents make up these guidelines;

*(1) Rights-Based Principles and Commitments*
*(2) Implementation Guide - From Principles to Practice*

The Guidelines were co-developed with APRRN membership, Secretariat, Steering Committee, Board, and Meaningful Refugee Participation Advisory Board, in partnership with the independent consultants from the Centre for Transformational Change, Lina Srivastava and Keefe Murren. The Centre for Transformational Change is a global impact platform which aims to cultivate community power to build just futures.

The Guidelines were further revised by APRRN's Learning Lead, Emma Goldie, following further consultation with the stakeholders listed above. For any questions, please contact Emma at ll@aprrn.org

## Acknowledgements


APRRN would like to thank our membership, the MRP Advisory Board, Secretariat, Steering Committee and Board, and all those who participated in the development of these Guidelines for sharing their time, perspectives and expertise.


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# Executive Summary

The **Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) considers and adopts Meaningful Refugee Participation (MRP) as a fundamental right and institutional obligation within all of its operations.** MRP requires systemic transformation, not consultation, not token representation, and not symbolic inclusion, but genuine decision-making authority for people with lived experience of displacement across all levels of the network.

Over the last few years, APRRN has taken significant steps towards advancing MRP, embedding it in its 2023–2027 Strategy, introducing a co-leadership model between people with and without lived experience of forced migration in 2023, establishing an MRP Advisory Group in 2024, and strengthening MRP practices across its network and with its partners. In 2025, more than 50 per cent of APRRN's Steering Committee members had lived experience of forced migration. While these developments represent important progress, we recognise that systemic barriers remain. These guidelines have therefore been developed to help address these barriers by fostering greater and more systematic inclusion in decision-making spaces, strengthening support and confidence, and promoting more intentional and diverse participation at all organisational levels.

At APRRN, we understand and recognise that shifting power and changing systems demands co-design and co-leadership between people with lived experiences and people with other expertise in the sector. Only when we value the expertise and experience of refugees and other people on the move in situations of vulnerability, will we be able to respond to displacement effectively with justice and the dignity of refugees at its core. The co-development of these guidelines was, therefore, essential to ensure that the guidelines respond effectively to the needs of the network and that they create mutual learning, and space for dialogue on shifting power dynamics across the network.

These MRP Guidelines establish a rights-based partnership approach and a framework for APRRN to cultivate and support genuine refugee leadership across all organisational levels. These guidelines aim **to advance inclusion, accessibility, leadership opportunities, and enhanced safety for people with lived experience within APRRN, while celebrating and holding space for different lived experiences and understanding the unique roles that all members, with or without lived experience, need to play in our common cause to protect and promote the human rights of refugees.**

These Guidelines establish rights-based principles through six binding principles:

- **Rights, Recognition & Governance** → *People with lived experience are recognised as rights-holders, experts and decision-makers, & are active participants across APRRN governance*
- **Equitable Partnerships & Shared Power**→ *We build partnerships that share power, resources and responsibility with refugee-led organisations, members and allies.*

- **Safe & Sustainable Leadership** → *Leadership is safe and sustainable, protecting physical, psychological and digital wellbeing and preventing isolation and burnout.*
- **Diversity, Inclusion & Access** → *Participation reflects the diversity of communities; barriers to access, influence and leadership are removed.*
- **Mutual Learning & Leadership Development** → *We value lived experience as expertise and People with and without lived experience learn, develop and lead alongside one another.*
- **Accountability & Reflection**→ *We reflect honestly, answer to our members and people with lived experience, and change based on what we learn.*

The guidelines have been split into two documents that should be read alongside each other;

1. ***MRP Guidelines: Rights-Based Principles and Commitments (this document);*** This sets out the principles, commitments and obligations that guide APRRN's approach to MRP. It establishes the basis for understanding MRP as a right and outlines APRRN's commitment to shared power, agency, leadership, safety, inclusion and accountability. This document will be *shared externally* with partners and stakeholders and our membership.
2. ***MRP Guidelines: Implementation Guide - From Principles to Practice;*** This document is an internal document and provides practical guidance on what these principles mean for the different constituencies within APRRN. It sets out recommended roles, actions and practical tools for the constituencies; Board, Steering Committee, Secretariat, Membership, in addition to the supportive role of the MRP Advisory board. It translates APRRN's commitments into areas of organisational responsibility and practical action.

   Implementation is an ongoing process of organisational transformation. The actions within this guide provide practical recommendations for APRRN constituencies to advance the commitments and principles. They should be reviewed, advanced and adapted as APRRN learns from its own experience and other networks, and as our understanding of participation, that is meaningful, intentional and diverse, continues to develop.

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## *A note on terminology:*

*Throughout this document, we refer to refugee leaders, advocates, refugee- led organisations as well as those with lived experience of forced migration and statelessness. The term refugee leader or refugee-led organisation refers to all people with lived experience of forced migration and statelessness - and not just those formally recognised as refugees by the United High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) or host governments. This includes all those with lived experience of forced migration and/or statelessness such as asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).*

# 1. Introduction and context

## Meaningful Refugee Participation: Global Definition

**At APRRN we adhere to the definition outlined by** The Global Compact on Refugees [1]

*"When refugees — regardless of location, legal recognition, gender, identity and demographics — are prepared for and participating in fora and processes where strategies are being developed and/or decisions are being made (including at local, national, regional, and global levels, and especially when they facilitate interactions with host states, donors, or other influential bodies), in a manner that is ethical, sustained, safe, and supported financially.*[2]"

## APRRN's Contextual Definition

APRRN adopts the above definition while contextualising it by:

- power redistribution in decisions-making, with a focus on shared authority within governance and strong leadership pathways across APRRN Working Groups.
- acknowledging that MRP manifests differently in network partnerships, requiring tailored approaches to collaboration among member organisations and individual members that respect the diverse political, economic, cultural,and operational landscapes across the Asia Pacific.
- adapting implementation strategies to reflect the unique dynamics of network-based advocacy, capacity building and network strengthening, and the regional contexts in which member organisations and individual members operate
- Adapting it to the regional context in the Asia Specific restricted civil society space, such as the legal non-recognition of refugee status, weak or absent refugee protection frameworks, state resistance to protecting non-nationals, digital surveillance risks and anti-immigration narratives.
- MRP implementation must also integrate safety, digital security, and trauma-informed leadership practices with adaptive implementation, sensitive to safety risks.

[1] The Global Compact of Refugees, 2017, https://globalcompactrefugees.org/meaningful-refugee-participation-guidelines
[2] The Global Refugee-Led Network and some key ally organisations created a definition of 'meaningful participation,' that was presented at the 2019 Global Refugee Foru - https://www.unhcr.org/us/media/meaningful-refugee-participation-transformative-leadership-guidelines-concrete-action

## About APRRN

**APRRN is a regional network of organisations and individuals working to advance the rights of refugees and other people in need of protection across the Asia Pacific region.** The network is made up of four interconnected constituencies - the **Board, Steering Committee, Secretariat and Membership** - each with different forms of authority, influence and responsibility within APRRN.

**The Board** provides organisational governance and oversight, including responsibility for ensuring that APRRN is well governed, sustainable and accountable to its purpose and membership. **The Steering Committee (SC)** provides member-led strategic leadership, representing the network's thematic and geographical working groups and helping to set priorities and direction for APRRN's advocacy and work. **The Secretariat** is responsible for supporting and coordinating the network's day-to-day operations and translating agreed priorities and strategy into programmes, activities and organisational systems. **Members** are the foundation of the network: they contribute expertise, experience and advocacy, participate in working groups and collective action, help shape the network's priorities, and elect representatives to the Steering Committee.

*A full breakdown of the people behind the APRRN network can be found at APRRN website.*

The **MRP Advisory Board**, established in 2024, provides an additional lived-experience-informed perspective to support APRRN's reflection, learning and accountability on meaningful refugee participation. The Advisory Board is made up of eight experts from different regions, backgrounds, genders and countries of origin, bringing a diversity of lived experiences, perspectives and expertise to APRRN's MRP work. The group helps identify barriers and gaps between APRRN's commitments and practice, provides advice and feedback on implementation, and contributes to the ongoing development of MRP across the network. **In line with APRRN's commitments to recognise and value lived experience and expertise, MRP Advisory Board members are compensated for their time and contribution.**

Everyone above was consulted and contributed to the development of these guidelines as we understand that **MRP is a shared responsibility**. Each has a different ability to influence structures, decisions, relationships and organisational culture, and therefore a different contribution to make to addressing barriers, sharing power and creating the conditions for meaningful refugee participation.

# Purpose of This Framework and Guidelines

This Framework establishes **MRP as a right** and a binding commitment for everyone who assumes a role within APRRN: the Board of Directors, the Steering Committee, the Secretariat, the Meaningful Refugee Participation Advisory Group, and the Members. It defines the institutional transformation requirements and sets binding commitments for varying roles and responsibilities. Additionally it clarifies accountability structures and provides assessment and ongoing questions we need to ask ourselves in order to see a true shift in power dynamics and systemic change. This framework aims to:

- Guide and inform our advocacy in relation to MRP
- Put MRP into practice across our daily work and organisational processes and embed refugee leadership across decision-making and programme development
- Provide APRRN staff , Board of Directors, Steering Committee Members, and the general membership with shared principles that we can communicate, share and abide by.
- Ensure participation is meaningful, safe, diverse, intentional, and sustainable
- Allow APRRN members/partners to better understand their role and commitments in relation to MRP

Operationalisation is detailed separately in the *MRP Guidance: Implementation Guide - From Principles to Practice (This is only available for internal use and needs to be read alongside these)*

# Methodology

These guidelines were co-developed with APRRN's Secretariat, Steering Committee, Board and membership, as well as the MRP Advisory Board. The co-development was essential to ensure that the guidelines respond effectively to the needs of the network, and that they create mutual learning, and space for dialogue on shifting power dynamics across the network.

They draw on APRRN's co-leadership experience, showing that meaningful refugee participation requires sustained collaboration between people with lived experience and allies, and that the main challenge is moving organisations from expressing support to making concrete systemic changes. Recognising APRRN's organisational evolution, the guidelines promote a flexible, trust-based self-assessment approach and emphasise formal procedures and accountability mechanisms to ensure sustainable implementation and a cultural shift toward refugee-led solutions.

To co-develop the guidelines, our consultant/s Lina Srivastava and Keefe Murren conducted interviews, surveys, and participatory consultations and collaborative workshops with all APRRN constituencies, including RLO members, Steering Committee, board, APRRNs MRP advisory board and Secretariat. The Framework reflects both evidence-based practice and lived experience insights.  A full overview of the methodology can be found in Annex 1: Methodology

# 2. Current Systemic Barriers to MRP within APRRN

In 2025, APRRN took a deep dive into reviewing our internal structures to review the power dynamics, and identify any gaps in our approach to meaningful refugee participation. Firstly, APRRN conducted our own internal assessment under the guidance of Asia Pacific Network Of Refugee's (APNOR) MRP Index to further understand the gaps and challenges. The MRP Index is designed to help organisations understand what meaningful refugee participation means, measure their current capability, and put it into practice.[3]

To complement the work with APNOR, we conducted participatory consultations, led by our consultant/s, Lina Srivastava and Keefe Murren. These activities identified further implementation challenges, revealing member-identified barriers to refugee leadership and broader systemic gaps within APRRN:

| Issue Area in APRRN | Key Challenges and Considerations |
|---|---|
| **Decision-making remains consultative rather than co-owned** | Refugee participation ***needs to further evolve from basic consultation to co-ownership of agenda-setting*** processes. Refugees must be recognised as agents of change, not solely beneficiaries. While steps are being made in this direction, more needs to be done. |
| **Representation is often limited to a few recurring individuals** | ***Representation must be more systemic,*** reflecting the full spectrum of refugee communities rather than focusing on a few individuals. Efforts should move beyond repeatedly engaging the same voices, ensuring equitable participation from diverse groups. Leadership roles should be rotated to avoid authority and monopoly among a few individuals. |
| **More Training on MRP to Dismantle existing Power Dynamics** | ***Members of the network without lived experience need to be trained to fully incorporate and value the expertise of those with lived experience***. Refugees with lived experience should receive governance training, when needed. Both refugee and non-refugee co-leaders should be open to change and continuous learning. |
| **Need more Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms** | There needs to be more active monitoring of the ***shift from tokenistic participation toward authentic refugee leadership***, with more regular feedback mechanisms from membership, SC and board. Additionally, there needs to be further tracking of individuals with lived experience who are asked to volunteer their expertise without compensation (such as in the Steering Committee), ensuring compensation and resources for demands and representation outside of these specific roles are compensated fairly. |

[3] *Meaningful Refugee Participation Index, APNOR - https://apnor.org/program-mrp-index/*

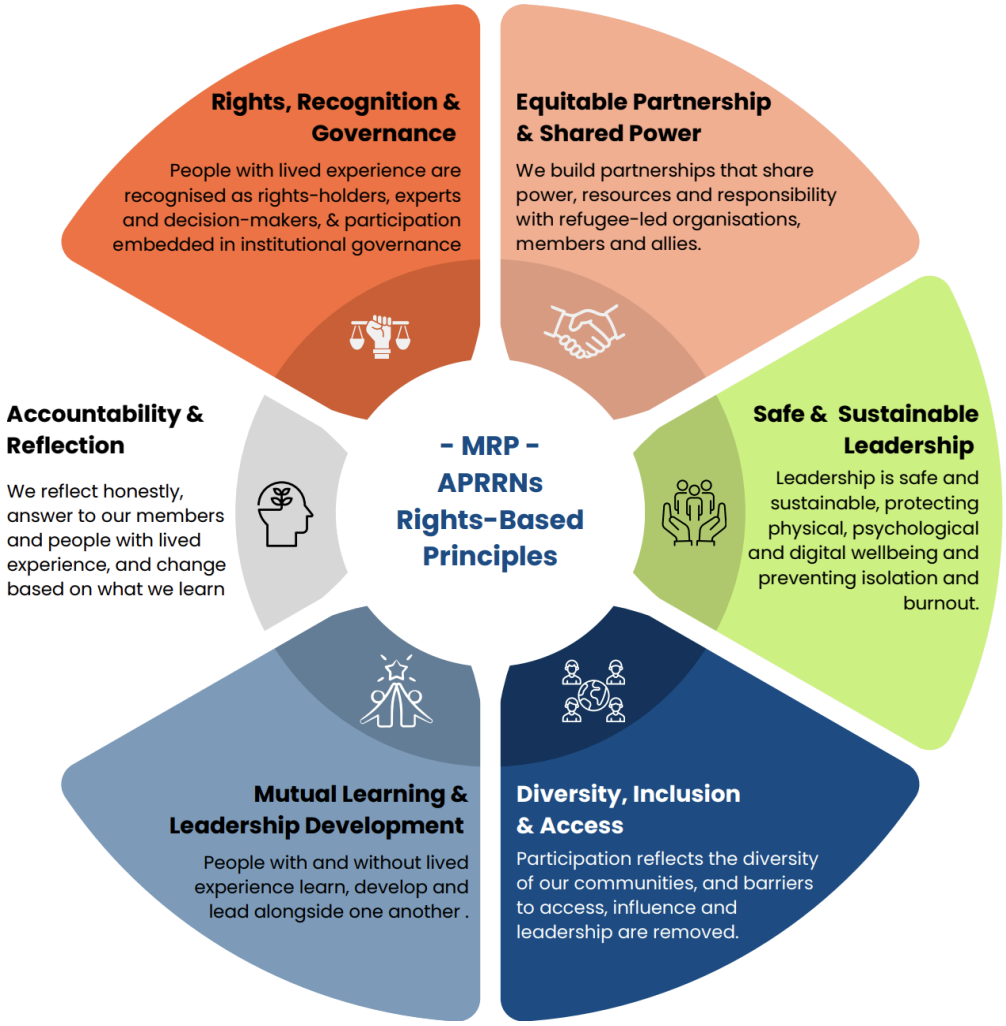
| | |
|---|---|
| **Addressing Systemic Barriers to participation;** | ***Participation spaces need to be psychologically safe*** to encourage honest and meaningful engagement from refugee leaders with targeted support for moving into leadership roles. This could include targeted recruitment to better ensure representation of diversity, as well as ensuring refugee leaders have access to mental health wellbeing support. |
| **Technology and Digital Accessibility must be improved** | Refugees who lack technological literacy must be intentionally included in all processes. Participation should reflect a give-and-take dynamic, where ***all forms of expertise are valued, and contribute equitably and meaningfully.*** |
| **Improved collaboration across specific regions, and refugee led initiatives.** | Further efforts must be made ***to facilitate connections & collaboration across the network through refugee-led initiatives.*** *Collaboration should address the priorities of specific populations* including Afghan, Hazaras, Myanmar, and Rohingya refugees, as well as refugees of African descent, and smaller ethnic or religious minorities from Vietnam or Cambodia. Support should be extended to refugee leaders from urban environments, and LGBTQI (this is non-exhaustive list) |

# 3. APRRN Principles - a rights-based approach to MRP

Drawing on our internal assessment, and the identified barriers identified by our membership, APRRN co-developed the following fundamental principles and binding commitments below which all constituencies of APRRN must adopt, commit to and embody through all elements of our work, in order to have a rights-based approach to participation.

At APRRN we believe that refugees have the right to shape decisions affecting their lives. APRRN reject beneficiary-oriented models and see **participation as a legal right, not a privilege**. We believe refugees should assume that their voices are expected, reflected and respected in the decisions that affect them within APRRN. To do this, we strongly stand by the principles below.

As we develop our principles, we continue to also welcome and learn from developments within the wider Meaningful Refugee Participation (MRP) movement. For example, we have signed the MRP Pledge and endorsed the Independent Declaration of the Right to Participate. [4]




[4] The Independent declaration on the Right to Participate: https://sites.google.com/view/right-to-participate/the-declaration?pli=1&authuser=0

# 4. Our Institutional Commitments

Under each principle, APRRN commits to the following core commitments, which establish binding obligations that recognise MRP as a fundamental right. These commitments are not just a declaration that APRRN will adopt to achieve meaningful participation that is diverse and intentional:  they are commitments to continually examine and, as necessary, change the ways in which power operates within our network.

*Detailed guidelines for implementation are provided in MRP Guidance; From Principles to Practice - implementation guide (only available for internal use)*



## Rights, Recognition and Governance

This will ensure *MRP is a deep, sustained organisational transformation process, not a quick fix.* APRRN will recognise people with lived experience of forced displacement as rights-holders, experts and decision-makers, and embed this recognition within the structures through which the organisation is governed and resourced. We commit to:

- ➔ Continually examining, changing and being accountable to the ways in which power operates within our network.
- ➔ Refugee participation is embedded into organisational policies, budgets, governance, and safety systems - institutionalising MRP through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and across organisational policies.
- ➔ Allocating a minimum of 5 per cent of the organisational budget to MRP related activities such as funding RLOs, or resource persons, training or travel for advocacy purposes. This is a minimum and will increase gradually annually.
- ➔ Making structural changes to governance, staffing and decision-making processes, including:
  - ◆ Improving and implementing co-leadership structures with genuine power-sharing.
  - ◆ Creating systematic leadership rotation mechanisms to prevent authority becoming concentrated among the same individuals and organisations.
  - ◆ Ensuring succession planning
  - ◆ Ensuring the organisational mission, vision and values explicitly include standards for refugee participation, with clear procedures and budgetary allocation
  - ◆ Developing refugee-inclusive processes across strategic planning, annual budgeting, work plans, hiring procedures, Board member selection, and nomination and election for the Steering Committee.

## Equitable Partnerships & Shared Power

APRRN will work to transform organisational culture and relationships towards genuine partnership, recognising and valuing different forms of expertise and sharing power, resources and responsibility. *We commit to:*

- ➔ Transforming organisational culture towards genuine partnership, with refugee influence in strategic decisions and systematic rotation of leadership authority.
- ➔ Improving our human resource processes and SOPs to ensure refugee leadership is a core consideration in staffing, and recruitment of people with lived experience for at least 50 per cent of Secretariat staff and consultants, Board of Directors, and the Steering Committee.
- ➔ Developing leadership pathways that will be accessible, inclusive and distribute real power. For example, the elections and nomination process for the Steering Committee will be accessible, inclusive, and designed to surface diverse refugee voices, experiences and skills.
- ➔ Building and developing equitable RLO partnerships, funding/resource sharing, advocacy leadership, decision-making and power analysis
- ➔ Working with partners and members to build bridges and allyship that support the transformation of relationships between RLOs and Refugee-Led Initiatives (RLIs), INGOs, UN agencies and donors, creating new possibilities for equitable partnerships with RLOs.
- ➔ Modelling equitable partnerships that are built on respectful collaboration and mutual recognition of expertise and that contribute to the broader transformation of the human rights & humanitarian system.

## Mutual learning & leadership development

APRRN will recognise that expertise and leadership are shared across the network, and will create opportunities for people with and without lived experience to learn, develop and lead alongside one another. ***We will ensure learning is not framed as one-way capacity building for refugee leaders. Create spaces where people with and without lived experience can exchange knowledge, challenge assumptions and learn from different forms of expertise***. *We commit to*

- ➔ Strengthening and co-developing leadership skills of those with and without lived experience through comprehensive training or mentoring, providing comprehensive governance training and professional development for all leaders.
- ➔ Improving our human resources to ensure refugee leadership is a core consideration in staffing, and recruitment of people with lived experience for at least 50 per cent of Secretariat staff and consultants, Board of Directors, and the Steering Committee.
- ➔ Coordinated and intentional knowledge-sharing between the network, through our Working Groups and other events.
- ➔ Creating opportunities and resourcing for refugee leaders and members to improve connections, collaboration and peer support network. Partner with refugee leaders to create connections, collaborations, and peer support networks across the Asia Pacific region.



## Safe & Sustainable Leadership

APRRN recognises that meaningful participation and leadership must be safe and sustainable, and will create organisational conditions that reduce avoidable risks, isolation, burnout and re-traumatisation, prioritising physical, psychological, and digital safety and wellbeing for refugee participants. **A trauma-informed approach should not assume that people with lived experience are inherently vulnerable or defined by trauma. Rather, it requires us to recognise the contexts and pressures in which people are participating**. We commit to:

- ➔ Establishing peer support networks and trauma-informed leadership approaches to prevent the isolation of refugee leaders in decision-making spaces.
- ➔ Implementing comprehensive wellbeing support systems that prevent burnout and re-traumatization such as:
  - ◆ addressing online risks faced by refugee leaders including cyberbullying /surveillance
  - ◆ mental health support structures including professional counseling and time-off policies
- ➔ Establishing safety protocols accounting for restrictive environments - implementing comprehensive risk assessment and safety protocols and emergency procedures are place
- ➔ Ensuring data privacy, including ensuring safe or anonymised ways to count representation and participation, acknowledging that publicly naming refugee representatives can carry real risk of arrest or detention.



## Diversity, Inclusion & Access

APRRN recognises that meaningful participation requires more than representation. It requires actively identifying and removing the barriers that prevent people from participating, influencing and leading and encompass language, accessibility, digital access, geographical participation, gender/youth/minority representation. We commit to

- ➔ Inclusive representation across diverse populations, genders, circumstances, and backgrounds of refugees and internally displaced persons in and from the region
- ➔ Avoiding monopolisation of MRP, facilitating and opening the space for more diverse and intentional representation from diverse communities, and consistently advocating for this approach with external partners, including UN agencies.
- ➔ Consider language, geographical and accessibility needs across all projects, programmes and events - Ensuring remote participation options for conferences, events and workshops with translation where possible.
- ➔ Address intersecting structural barriers (language, geography, status, gender) through targeted outreach, mentorship, fair compensation, and succession planning.

- ➔ Taking digital access and literacy into account across participation and leadership opportunities, including implementing comprehensive digital accessibility measures ensuring refugees in camps, remote regions, or with limited digital literacy are not excluded, with secure communication channels for sensitive advocacy work and digital tools accessible to all participants.



## Accountability & Reflection

APRRN will regularly reflect on what is working, where gaps and barriers remain, and what needs to change, using evidence and lived experience to inform ongoing adaptation and organisational learning and remain accountable for translating its commitments into practice through ongoing reflection, learning and adaptation. We commit to:

- ➔ Continually examine, change and be accountable to the ways in which power operates within our network. We will continually do this through holding systematic organisational self-reflection processes that identify and dismantle barriers to refugee leadership.
- ➔ Develop an M&E and learning approach within APRRN to track progress against its MRP commitments, assess whether meaningful changes in participation, influence and decision-making are occurring, and identify where further action is needed
- ➔ Create meaningful accountability mechanisms that create opportunities for our membership, and partially those people with lived experience to provide feedback, raise concerns and hold the organisation accountable for how MRP is implemented.
- ➔ Use learning to adapt and improve by reflecting on what is working, where gaps and barriers remain, and what needs to change, using evidence and lived experience to inform ongoing adaptation and organisational learning.

# 5. Next steps - moving from principles to practice

It is important to remember that Meaningful Refugee Participation is not a standalone initiative, project or set of activities. It is an ongoing structural transformation and commitment to change how power, expertise, experience, leadership and decision-making operate within APRRN.

The principles and commitments set out in this document, therefore, provide the foundation for that change. They establish what APRRN believes, what it is accountable for, and the organisational conditions it commits to creating so that people with lived experience of forced displacement can exercise genuine influence, authority and leadership in an environment that is facilitating and safe.

**APRRN recognises that these commitments require continued reflection and change.** They are not a declaration that APRRN has achieved meaningful refugee participation, nor that there is a single model for doing so. Rather, they provide a framework against which APRRN can examine its own structures, relationships and practices, identify where power remains concentrated or barriers persist, and take action to address them.

## A request to our members and partners:

All APRRN members and partners have a role in creating a network in which people with diverse lived experience can participate, influence and lead in a safe and enabling environment. Members are strongly encouraged to examine their own organisational practices and power dynamics, participate in MRP learning and reflection, and develop more equitable partnerships with refugee-led organisations. Members and partners should support and advocate for refugee-led leadership and network-building, ensure that their participation in APRRN spaces and beyond, is inclusive and safe, and contribute to feedback and accountability processes.

Members are also encouraged to move beyond expressing commitment to MRP by identifying and making concrete changes within their own organisations and partnerships.

## Moving from principles to practice

APRRN's internal *MRP Guidance; From Principles to Practice - implementation guide*, translates these principles and commitments into practical guidance for APRRN's different constituencies. This is a document only available for internal use and sets out roles, responsibilities, accountability, actions and practical guidance to support the changes required across governance, leadership, staffing, partnerships, participation, safety and organisational learning.

Importantly, the implementation process provides space for reflection and learning and requires APRRN to continually listen, reflect, adapt and change. It importantly asks the constituencies to continually engage and question their processes, asking all members to reflect regularly on power and participation across all our work, advocacy, programmes and partnerships.

# 6. Annex 1

## Methodology

**Guiding principles for development of these guidelines**

- **Co-Leadership lessons:** These guidelines incorporate learning from APRRN's co-leadership experience demonstrating that meaningful refugee participation requires both those with lived experience and allies to work together toward the same goal. The co-leadership model of APPRN's Co-Secretaries General has shown that sustainable platforms are needed where people with lived experience can contribute in an impactful and equitable manner, moving beyond ad hoc representation opportunities. The experience revealed less direct resistance to MRP than anticipated, but highlighted the critical gap between organisations expressing interest and making practical systemic changes. While there is welcoming response to meaningful refugee participation, the primary challenge lies in ensuring organisations move beyond expressing interest to implementing concrete systemic transformations and sustaining them.

- **Regional realities:** These guidelines are designed to operate within the Asia Pacific human rights context, where the majority of states have demonstrated unwillingness and inability to protect vulnerable populations, in particular non-nationals, civil society space is restricted, and legal frameworks remain weak or non-existent. Implementation must account for these regional realities while capitalising on emerging opportunities, including growing youth movements demanding democratic rights and potential paradigm shifts in countries like Thailand. Given this challenging environment, implementation requires adaptive and responsive approaches that maintain commitment to refugee leadership while ensuring particular attention to safety, digital security, and sustainable support systems that can withstand political pressures.

- **Recognising APRRN's evolution:** As APRRN has evolved significantly since 2008—now receiving project grants for specific advocacy issues and increasingly participating, influencing and setting the agenda in national, regional, and global forums—these guidelines acknowledge that MRP implementation must adapt to these changing organisational realities and external expectations, ensuring refugee leadership remains central amid expanding institutional responsibilities.

- **Trust-based self-assessment approach:** These guidelines emphasise flexibility and trust-based implementation rather than audit-style enforcement. The objective is not to judge but to identify strengths and areas for improvement, enabling organisations to refine their approaches and maximise their impact.

- **Sustainable implementation:** Organisations without formal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) consistently backslide during transitions or crises. Written procedures and regular accountability mechanisms are essential for sustainable MRP implementation. organisations must shift from asking how they can help refugees to recognising how refugees can lead the solutions. This requires not just policy changes but fundamental cultural transformation that recognises the full humanity, experience, expertise, and leadership capacity of people with lived experience of displacement. The Guidelines and Implementation Guide will also form an integral part of APRRN's forthcoming membership strategy.

**Methodology and sources**

These guidelines were developed through a comprehensive research and consultation process that combined eleven (11) key informant interviews, survey data collection from thirty-two (32) respondents, desk research, two participatory consultation meetings, and two collaborative sensemaking workshops to ensure the framework reflects both evidence-based practices and the lived experiences of refugee communities across the Asia Pacific region. The development process has drawn extensively from existing APRRN organisational documents and external frameworks to ground the guidelines in current operational realities while building toward transformational change. The following documents informed the guidelines:

- APRRN Strategy 2023-2027
- Asia Pacific Conference Refugee Rights (APCRR 9) Summary Report (February 23, 2024)
- APRRN Rohingya Working Group Action Plan (2021-23)
- APRRN Electoral Guidelines and Procedures (June 14, 2021)
- APRRN Programme Handbook (Updated: January 2022)
- APRRN Personnel Policy (March 2022)
- APRRN Complaints Committee Terms of Reference (March 2022)
- APRRN Principles for developing APRRN policy positions
- APRRN Code of Conduct (August 4, 2014)
- APRRN Code of Good Practice (August 4, 2014)
- APRRN Members Guide 2025
- APNOR Meaningful Refugee Participation Index (March - April 2025)
- APNOR Meaningful Refugee Participation Index Scorecard
- Internal Learning and Insights Report (May 2024)