

# Addressing the State of Refugee Accommodation and Housing Through Global Knowledge Exchange

2023-2026 Report



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# Acronyms

|              |                                                          |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ATCR</b>  | Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement          |
| <b>CRCP</b>  | Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways |
| <b>CWS</b>   | Church World Service                                     |
| <b>GRAWG</b> | Global Refugee Accommodation Working Group               |
| <b>INGO</b>  | International Non-Governmental Organization              |
| <b>IOM</b>   | International Organization for Migration                 |
| <b>IRPP</b>  | Irish Refugee Protection Programme                       |
| <b>RHS</b>   | Refugee Housing Solutions                                |
| <b>UNHCR</b> | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees            |

# GLOBAL REFUGEE ACCOMMODATION working group

The Global Refugee Accommodation Working Group (GRAWG) is a cross-sector forum established in response to a growing need for collaboration following the 2023 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP), formally known as the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR), to advance international exchange, practical learning, and solution-oriented attention on refugee accommodation and housing.

At a time when access to safe, affordable, and dignified housing is a significant challenge facing resettlement and broader protection systems, GRAWG brings together governments, UNHCR, local and international NGOs, academia, among other partners to share comparative experience, identify promising approaches, and strengthen collective responses.

Currently led by Church World Service as its permanent Co-Chair and Secretariat but launched with the support of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme as inaugural State Co-Chair, GRAWG has developed into a standing platform for dialogue, collaboration, and action on housing accommodations for displaced persons around the globe.

Learn more about GRAWG:  
[refugeeaccommodation.org](https://refugeeaccommodation.org)





# Authoritative and Up-to-Date Knowledge on Global, National, and Local Housing Policies

## Why This is Important

Housing affordability continues to decline around the globe. The demand for affordable housing is outpacing supply, and housing costs continue to rise.<sup>1</sup> The number of homes being built is not keeping up with demand and population growth, especially in already overcrowded urban areas. An International Monetary Fund analysis describes the combined effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the return of inflation as setting off perhaps the world's worst housing affordability crisis in more than a decade.<sup>2</sup> Many factors contribute, including mortgage rates, household income, interest, cost of living, and insufficient social support mechanisms, but the underlying trend was anticipated well before the pandemic: a 2014 study by the McKinsey Global Institute estimated that urbanization and income growth would result in approximately 1.6 billion people being affected by housing affordability by 2025.<sup>3</sup>

That projection has proven accurate. The World Economic Forum reported that as of June 2024, around 1.6 billion people worldwide lacked adequate housing, with the figure expected to rise to 3 billion by 2030.<sup>4</sup> More recent figures sharpen the picture further: UN-Habitat's *Annual Report 2024: Adequate Housing for All* estimates that 2.8 billion people now lack adequate housing, including more than 1.1 billion living in slums or informal settlements and approximately 300 million facing absolute homelessness.<sup>5</sup> Meeting projected demand by 2030 will require building roughly 96,000 affordable housing units every day equating to about one new home every second.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Global Housing Shortages Can Harm Migrant Reception and Integration. Migration Policy Institute. 20 March 2024. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/housing-crisis-immigrants-integration>

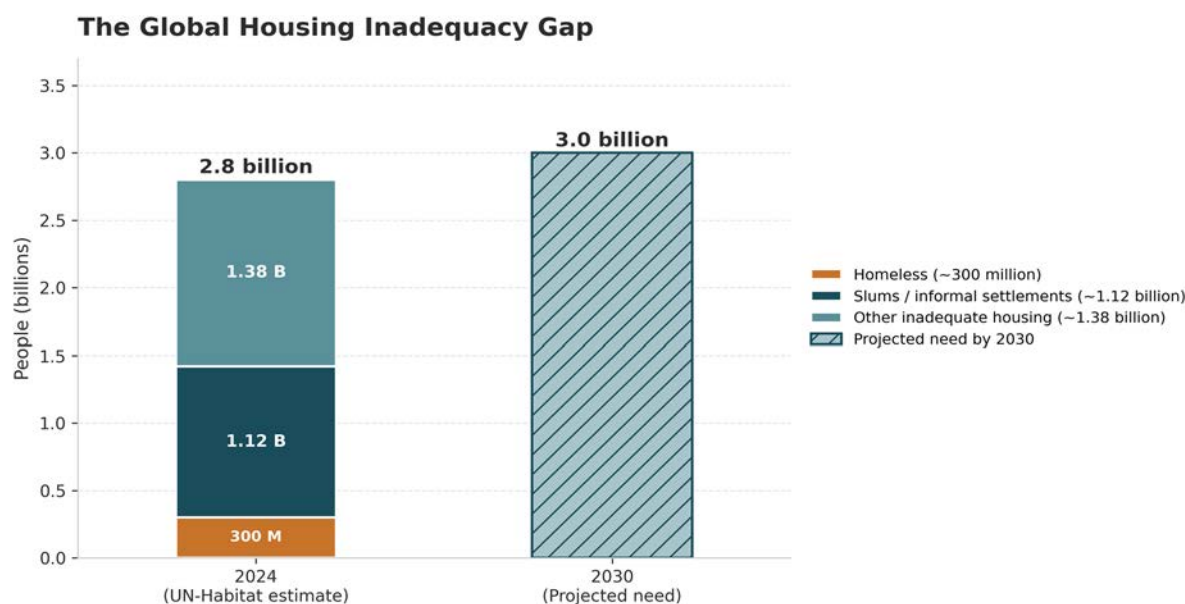
2 The Housing Affordability Crunch. International Monetary Fund. December 2024. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2024/12/the-housing-affordability-crunch-deniz-igan>

3 Tackling the World's Affordable Housing Challenge. McKinsey Global Institute. 1 October 2014. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/urbanization/tackling-the-worlds-affordable-housing-challenge>

4 Practical Solutions to the World's Spiraling Housing Crisis. World Economic Forum. 10 June 2024. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/06/global-housing-crisis-practical-solutions>

5 Annual Report 2024. UN Habitat. [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2025/05/annual\\_report\\_2025\\_final.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2025/05/annual_report_2025_final.pdf)

6 UN searches for solutions to global housing crisis. UN News. 29 May 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/05/1163851>



*Figure 1. The global housing inadequacy gap.*

Sources: UN-Habitat Annual Report 2024; UN News, 29 May 2025.

This crisis interacts with displacement in concrete ways. Housing is consistently identified as a top challenge for successfully resettling and integrating newcomers into resettlement States.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the available knowledge on how housing for refugees works across countries, i.e. what policies are in place, what standards apply, how programs are funded, and what services are bundled with accommodation remain fragmented. Different States operate under very different legal, institutional, and market conditions, and there is no single, accessible repository that allows policy makers, NGOs, academics, and refugees to compare those conditions side by side.

Prior to 2023, no high-level global forum on resettlement gave housing dedicated focus, and no comparative resource existed to surface how housing is delivered across resettlement programs. Without this comparative baseline, replicable lessons are difficult to identify and the case for housing-specific reform is harder to make.

**This is the gap that GRAWG's knowledge work seeks to fill.**

<sup>7</sup> Housing for Migrants and Refugees in the UNECE Region: Challenges and Practices. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. <https://unece.org/housing/publications/housing-for-migrants-and-refugees>



## What GRAWG has Done

From its first meetings in 2023, GRAWG identified the development of authoritative, comparable knowledge on housing policy across resettlement States as a foundational priority. Three connected workstreams have emerged: the Refugee Housing Journey Map, the GRAWG website, and ongoing cross-country participation.

### The Refugee Housing Journey Map

The [Refugee Housing Journey Map](#) is GRAWG's flagship digital initiative. It is designed to inform stakeholders on how housing works in different resettlement countries, create a baseline for effective cross-national knowledge exchange, and inspire stakeholders to overcome challenges. The Map allows users to follow the journey of fictional refugees as they navigate through different States' resettlement programs, illustrating the challenges and varied models of supporting resettled refugees through safe, affordable accommodation and housing.

As of late 2025, the Map covers Ireland and the United States of America, with expansion efforts ongoing to represent additional countries. The long-term goal is to reflect all countries of resettlement and potentially countries of first asylum. While the map and underlying process remain relevant, some country-specific details may evolve over time, as each map reflects the structure in place at the time of development.\*

\* For example, the Refugee Housing Journey of the United States reflects the standard model that was in place from 1980 to 2025.

An aerial photograph of the Earth, showing the Atlantic Ocean, Europe, and Africa. The image is used as a background for the text overlay.

## **The GRAWG Website as a Policy Knowledge Platform**

As Permanent Co-Chair, CWS led the development of [refugeeaccommodation.org](https://refugeeaccommodation.org), which hosts GRAWG's policy-relevant outputs. Since its initial launch, the website has expanded to feature relevant research and reports on resettlement, accommodation, and housing topics, background on GRAWG's purpose and activities, and the Refugee Housing Journey Map. The goal is to amplify proven models of refugee accommodation while acting as an engaging resource for users to discover ways of improving resettlement outcomes through better approaches to refugee housing in their States.

## **Cross-country Participation as a Source of Comparative Knowledge**

GRAWG's comparative work draws directly on its membership. Country participation now spans more than 18 countries to date including Ireland, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Australia, Spain, Japan, Portugal, France, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Canada, Switzerland, the United States, Argentina, and New Zealand across government, NGO/INGO, academic, and UNHCR participants. Member meetings and CRCP sessions surface country-specific policy detail that feeds back into the Refugee Housing Journey Map, symposium/webinar topics, and into the body of written outputs described in the following sections.



CWS C W S -(R D P) OFFICE NYARUGUSU CAMP CWS

## Focus in the Current Landscape

In 2025, the global resettlement landscape changed significantly. This shift was marked by budget cuts, dramatically lower resettlement quotas in many countries, and a policy turn toward third-country and whole-of-route solutions. In this environment, the demand for authoritative comparative knowledge does not decrease but intensifies. Stakeholders need rapid, reliable, side-by-side information to design replacement models, defend existing programs, and adapt to volatile arrival patterns.

GRAWG responded to the changing environment with two new policy products.

### Policy Framework: Navigating Options, Avoiding Pitfalls

In April 2026, GRAWG published the first edition of *Navigating Options, Avoiding Pitfalls: Key Tools for Reception and Housing in Today's International Protection Landscape*, a skeletal policy framework designed to support policy makers, municipalities, NGOs, and international actors in selecting and implementing safe, affordable, decent, and dignified housing solutions for refugees, asylum seekers, and other displaced people.<sup>8</sup> The framework draws on comparative practice, practical learning, and global examples gathered within GRAWG and is explicitly oriented toward today's political reality. It sets out when specific housing solutions work best and how to anticipate and mitigate problems; the importance of surge and post-surge pathways; an easy-to-follow decision tree to guide model selection, and an overview of common failure modes (such as surge without an exit strategy, buffer capacity without stable funding, and temporary solutions becoming permanent by default) together with mitigations. The full text is available on the [GRAWG website](https://refugeeaccommodation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/GRAWG-policy-framework-04.2026.pdf).

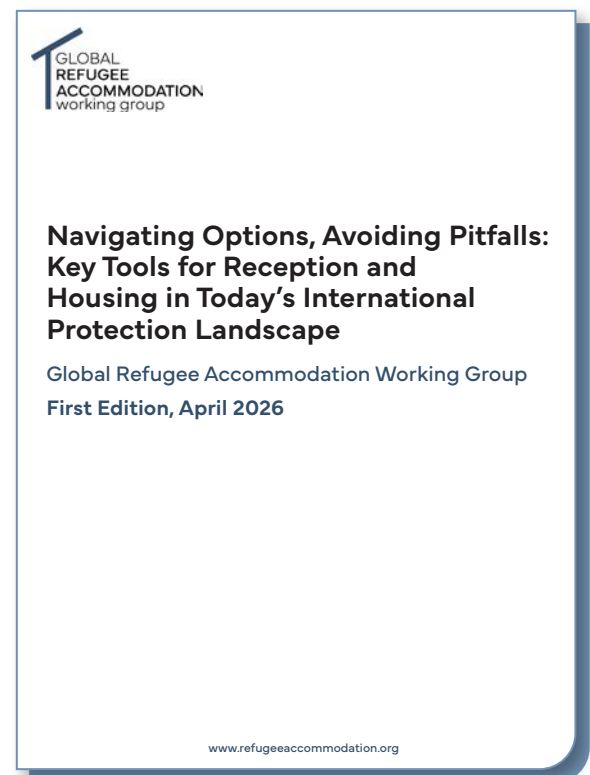


Image 1. GRAWG report cover.

<sup>8</sup> Navigating Options, Avoiding Pitfalls: Key Tools for Reception and Housing in Today's International Protection Landscape. Global Refugee Accommodation Working Group, First Edition, April 2026. <https://refugeeaccommodation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/GRAWG-policy-framework-04.2026.pdf>



## Whole-of-Route Case Study: Bosnia and Spain

Building on the policy framework, GRAWG produced in June 2026 a comparative case study applying the whole-of-route approach to housing. The study examines housing and accommodation outcomes for refugees, asylum seekers, regularized migrants, and undocumented people in two countries that sit at very different points along the journey of displaced people towards Western Europe: Bosnia and Herzegovina, a transit country on the Western Balkans route, and Spain, a frontline arrival country and resettlement state on the EU's southern frontier. The report links the two cases by a single policy question: as governments and international organizations increasingly speak of a "whole-of-route" or "route-based" approach to mixed movements, does that approach materially improve housing and protection outcomes for people on the move, or does it operate principally as a vocabulary for distributing border control upstream?

Together, the Refugee Housing Journey Map, the policy framework, and the Bosnia–Spain case study form the backbone of GRAWG's ambition to become the go-to source on information on national and sub-national housing policies and a place where stakeholders can find the most promising solutions, the suggested standards for housing, and the comparative evidence needed to make the housing case in their own contexts.

# A Global Knowledge Exchange Forum on Housing

## Why This is Important

Housing affordability is a global challenge, but the conversations that shape resettlement and reception policy are often siloed by country, by sector, or by professional discipline. The *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024* estimated that in 2022 some 1.1 billion people were living in slums in urban areas, further exacerbating the growing housing crisis, especially in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>9</sup> Urbanization continues to rise, with an estimated 70% of the world's population projected to live in urban centers by 2050.

UNHCR's *Global Report 2024* estimated that 129.9 million people were forcibly displaced or stateless globally, an increase from the 2023 estimate of 122.6 million, while global housing affordability has continued to worsen.<sup>10</sup> The regional disparities are stark. In Africa, 62 percent of urban dwellings are informal, and more than 500 million people in the Asia-Pacific region lack access to basic water services. Globally, households spend an average of 31 percent of their income on shelter; in sub-Saharan Africa, that figure rises to 43.5 percent, leaving little for food, schooling, or health care.<sup>11</sup> Patterns of this kind cannot be understood nor let alone addressed from inside any single country or sector.

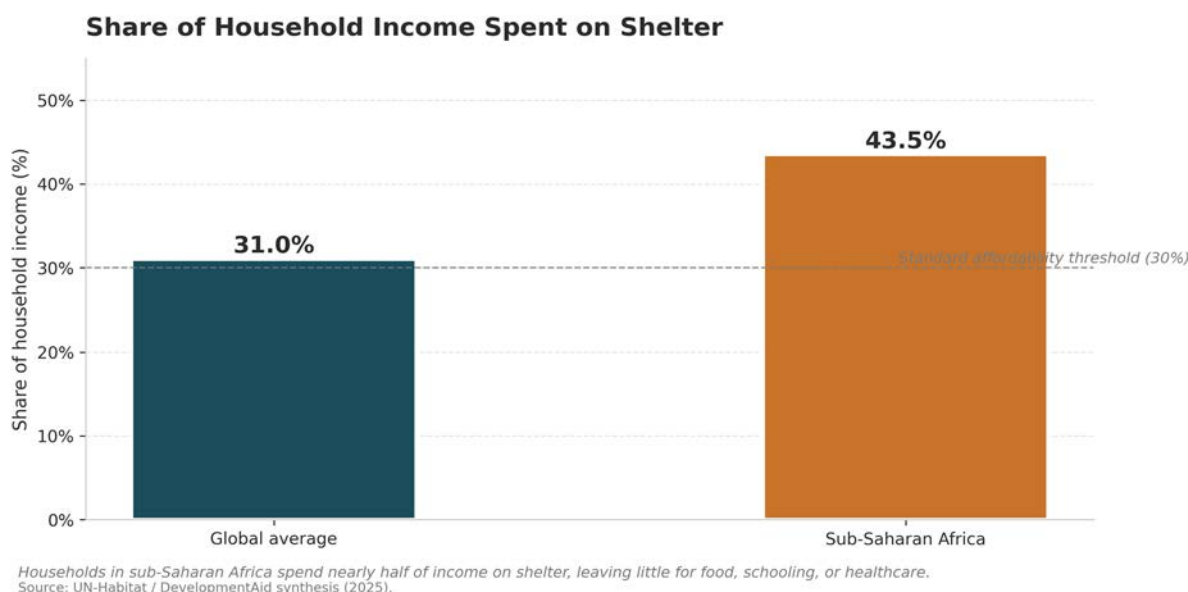


Photo: Adobe Stock

<sup>9</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024. United Nations. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024>

<sup>10</sup> Global Report 2024. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-report-2024>

<sup>11</sup> Housing crisis: countries at breaking point in 2025. DevelopmentAid. 30 December 2025. <https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/203238/housing-crisis-in-2025>



*Figure 2. Share of household income spent on shelter.*  
Sources: UN-Habitat / DevelopmentAid synthesis (2025).

Solving challenges of this scale requires sustained cross-sector exchange. State agencies bring policy reach and budget authority; NGOs and INGOs bring direct service experience and community trust; local and refugee-led organizations bring lived experience and on-the-ground expertise; UNHCR and IOM bring global coordination; academics bring comparative analysis; the private sector and the architecture and finance communities bring tools and models that the resettlement world is not yet using at scale. None of these groups can solve the problem alone, and historically they have rarely sat in the same room specifically around housing.

Prior to 2023, no high-level global forum was devoted to refugee accommodation, which meant there was no consistent venue for these conversations to compound over time.

**A dedicated forum is the prerequisite for everything else GRAWG seeks to do. Exchange of comparative knowledge, innovative models, and policy influence is critical because this is how those products are generated, tested, and refined.**



## What GRAWG has Done

Since its inaugural meeting in November 2023, GRAWG has built a regular, multi-format program of convenings. Three streams of activity now run in parallel: symposia and webinars, presence and leadership at the annual CRCP cycle, and member meetings.

### Symposia and Webinars

#### **Inaugural Global Refugee Accommodation Symposium** *May 2024*

The inaugural symposium convened key sectoral stakeholders globally to learn and discuss housing solutions and practices from new angles and perspectives. By gathering non-resettlement actors and organizations who work on housing, the symposium acknowledged the truly global scale and nature of the housing crisis. Speakers represented the Architects Climate Action Network (UK), Launch Capital Partners (USA), the UK Home Office, Welcoming Australia, Welcome Japan, Friendly Door (Japan), and Living in Peace (Japan), drawing from the fields of finance, architecture, academia, and policy. The aim was to open new avenues for fresh thinking and new collaborations in the resettlement housing context, and to show the necessity of a whole-of-society approach that could enable resettlement States to increase their refugee arrivals and improve refugee housing standards.



## **Housing Challenges and Solutions from the Small Resettlement State Perspective**

*September 2024*

The second GRAWG symposium took on a different angle. Many of the world's State resettlement programs, from Ireland to New Zealand, are small in size and receive only a few thousand refugees per year. Because of their size and makeup, these States often share similar challenges and benefit from discussing each other's solutions and models. Smaller States rarely get a dedicated forum to present and discuss their dilemmas, experiences, and models, and this webinar gave New Zealand, Ireland, and Norway center stage to discuss their unique and shared challenges, solutions, and models around refugee housing — a leading concern for resettlement States both big and small.

## **Housing Challenges and Solutions in the New International Protection Landscape: Considering the Whole of the Route**

*January 2026*

The third GRAWG webinar responded directly to the changed environment. Major changes to the international protection system over the past few years, including major funding cuts, dramatically lower resettlement quotas in many countries, and a policy turn toward third-country solutions, present immense challenges. Yet, the need to find durable solutions for displaced populations has not abated; and no matter where they are, displaced people still need safe, affordable, and decent housing. The webinar reflected on housing solutions through the whole-of-route lens, with panelists from Belgium and IOM presenting on housing challenges and solutions in host countries, transit countries and border regions, and countries of asylum.





## GLOBAL REFUGEE ACCOMMODATION working group

### Annual Convenings: Leadership at the CRCP

The CRCP is the most important multilateral forum for UNHCR, States, the private sector, academia, NGOs, and refugees, bringing together more than 350 actors to discuss and advance resettlement issues of common interest.<sup>12</sup> The annual event began in 1995 and is held in Geneva, Switzerland, with a working group convened in a different location each year a few months prior. CRCP is led in collaboration with UNHCR and the Refugee Advisory Group and is co-chaired by a government and an NGO each year.

### ATCR 2023 – Geneva Plenary

The ATCR 2023 theme was “Learning in Crisis: Building Solutions Together,” and CWS submitted a proposal to the ATCR 2023 co-chairs, the Government of Ireland’s Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) and Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre in partnership with UNHCR, to lead a session on shelter and housing, anchored in the ATCR’s mandate to facilitate new and innovative ways to combine resources and improve resettlement for refugees. The session made the case that the housing sector needed renewed attention, and that innovation, including adaptation and reimagining of existing housing stock was critical for long-term resettlement success. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration of the United States (U.S.) Department of State had previously funded CWS to create the Refugee Housing Solutions<sup>13</sup> initiative to provide technical assistance and capacity development support to U.S. refugee resettlement and housing stakeholders including resettlement agency professionals, housing providers, community and faith partners, volunteers, refugees, and newcomers and that experience grounded CWS’s call to action. The CWS call to action in the 2023 plenary was attended by more than 250 actors and directly produced the task force that became GRAWG.

<sup>12</sup> Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/us/what-we-do/build-better-futures/long-term-solutions/resettlement/consultations-resettlement-and-0>

<sup>13</sup> In 2022, CWS launched Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS) to improve housing options for refugees in the United States by expanding access to available and affordable housing. RHS is a hallmark of CWS innovation and partnership with the U.S. Government. RHS is a resource for all newcomers — humanitarian parolees, refugees, and others. As such, RHS is positioned to continue expansion and innovation as the need for newcomer housing continues.

## CRCP 2024 – Sydney Working Group and Geneva Plenary

The CRCP 2024 theme was “Solutions in Action,” co-chaired by the Australian Government, the Refugee Council of Australia, and UNHCR. During the CRCP 2024 Working Group in Sydney, GRAWG was publicly launched at a plenary session attended by more than 100 actors, highlighting its mission, purpose, scope, achievements to date, and newly developed website, and inviting governments, organizations, and individuals to submit an expression of interest. GRAWG Co-Chairs also participated in a breakout session on accommodation solutions from around the globe, showcasing innovative housing projects from Sweden (Blick Arkitektur) and the United States (Launch Capital Partners) alongside panelists from Norway and Australia.

At CRCP 2024 in Geneva, GRAWG was added to the pre-CRCP invite-only Day 1 agenda and held its first in-person members meeting, and was then asked to develop and lead an accommodation solutions breakout session featuring speakers from a local authority in Ireland, the Belgian Government, UNHCR Baltics/Nordics, and the U.S. Government, moderated by GRAWG Co-Chairs.



The logo consists of a large, stylized letter 'T' in a light beige color. To the right of the 'T', the words 'GLOBAL', 'REFUGEE', 'ACCOMMODATION', and 'working group' are stacked vertically in a smaller, light beige, sans-serif font.

GLOBAL  
REFUGEE  
ACCOMMODATION  
working group

**GRAWG's public  
launch at the CRCP  
2024 in Sydney was  
attended by more than  
100 global  
stakeholders.**

## CRCP 2025 – Madrid Working Group and Geneva Plenary

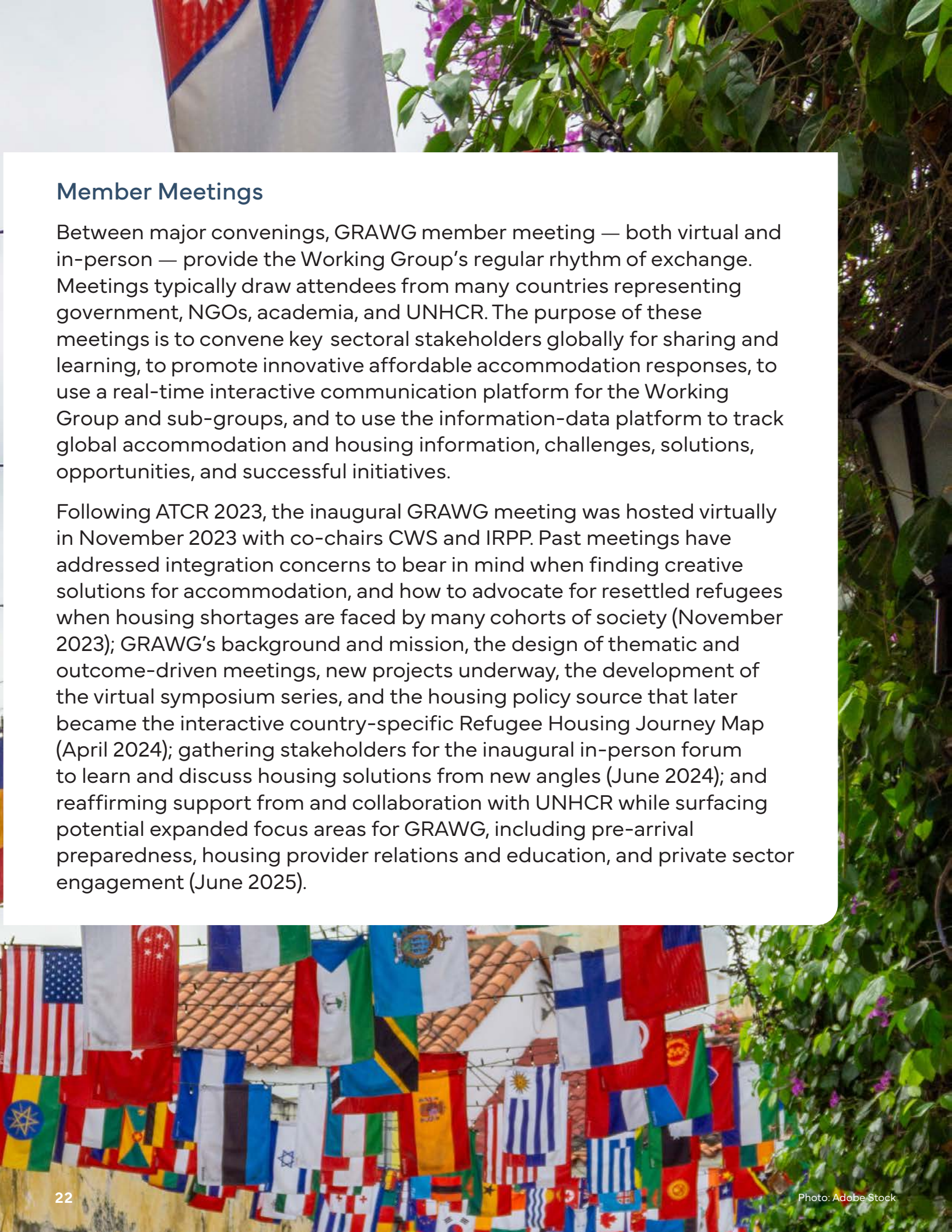
The CRCP 2025 theme was “30 years of Securing Solutions Together,” co-chaired by Spain’s Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations (MISSM) and the NGO co-chair Accem (Spain), in partnership with UNHCR. At the Madrid Working Group, GRAWG was asked to lead two accommodation sessions.

The first, *Accommodation Solutions and Resettlement*, featured panelists from the Ministry of Inclusion (Spain), CWS, and a refugee program in New Zealand, and it focused on the accommodation dynamics and challenges faced by resettlement countries, good practices and the potential of new alliances, public narratives around accommodation challenges and refugees, and an update on GRAWG’s achievements including the launch of the Refugee Housing Journey Map resource.

The second session, *The Key Role of Local Authorities in Integration*, was led by GRAWG in design and development and featured panelists from United Cities and Local Governments, the Municipality of Strängnäs (Sweden), a local authority in Ireland, Barcelona City Council, and the Municipality of Culemborg (Netherlands), moderated by UNHCR Canada, exploring the central role municipalities play in directly implementing integration programs and securing housing.

At CRCP 2025 in Geneva, GRAWG again joined the pre-CRCP Day 1 agenda, held an in-person members meeting, set up a conference table at the request of UNHCR and the Ministry of Spain to showcase the country-specific Refugee Housing Journey Map, and led the design and moderation of the session *Building a Home for Refugees and Local Communities: Innovative Practices in Accommodation* with panelists from the Sudan Volunteer Organization, the Municipality of Culemborg, and GRAWG.





## Member Meetings

Between major convenings, GRAWG member meeting — both virtual and in-person — provide the Working Group’s regular rhythm of exchange. Meetings typically draw attendees from many countries representing government, NGOs, academia, and UNHCR. The purpose of these meetings is to convene key sectoral stakeholders globally for sharing and learning, to promote innovative affordable accommodation responses, to use a real-time interactive communication platform for the Working Group and sub-groups, and to use the information-data platform to track global accommodation and housing information, challenges, solutions, opportunities, and successful initiatives.

Following ATCR 2023, the inaugural GRAWG meeting was hosted virtually in November 2023 with co-chairs CWS and IRPP. Past meetings have addressed integration concerns to bear in mind when finding creative solutions for accommodation, and how to advocate for resettled refugees when housing shortages are faced by many cohorts of society (November 2023); GRAWG’s background and mission, the design of thematic and outcome-driven meetings, new projects underway, the development of the virtual symposium series, and the housing policy source that later became the interactive country-specific Refugee Housing Journey Map (April 2024); gathering stakeholders for the inaugural in-person forum to learn and discuss housing solutions from new angles (June 2024); and reaffirming support from and collaboration with UNHCR while surfacing potential expanded focus areas for GRAWG, including pre-arrival preparedness, housing provider relations and education, and private sector engagement (June 2025).

## Focus in the Current Landscape

The same shifts that strengthen the case for comparative policy knowledge such as funding cuts, lower resettlement quotas, and a turn to whole-of-route approaches also raise the stakes for the forum itself. Resettlement programs face existential challenges, and asylum systems are not far behind. In this environment, the gathering function of GRAWG matters more, not less: it is where existing knowledge can be safeguarded so it remains available if and when programs scale back up, and where the conversation about along-the-route solutions can be expanded beyond the resettlement community.

GRAWG's January 2026 webinar on housing challenges and solutions in the new international protection landscape was the first explicit step in this direction. GRAWG plans to continue holding regular member meetings and to organize two to four solutions- and outcome-focused webinars and events per year on the most pressing housing issues, while engaging more actively with the UNHCR 2030 Roadmap and other housing policy frameworks. Efforts are also underway to lead a working group meeting on the margins of the 2026 CRCP in Geneva.

Alongside this content shift, GRAWG is fostering further inclusion and participation from resettlement stakeholders across the globe while maintaining relationships within the current network, striking a fair balance between geography, the size of resettlement program, and type of engagement. This will be pursued through strategic networking, increased web and public presence, bilateral and multilateral meetings, and continued promotion at conferences, particularly the CRCP. Attention is being given to broadening representation beyond the U.S./European axis, including stakeholders from Africa, South America, and countries of first asylum.



Photo: Adobe Stock

# Fostering Innovative Solutions and Models

## Why This is Important

The scale of the global affordability gap means that conventional housing supply, on its own, cannot meet the need. For displaced people, the gap is compounded: housing for migrants and refugees is consistently identified as a top challenge for successfully resettling and integrating newcomers in resettlement States.

Closing a gap of this size requires innovation; not only more housing, but different housing such as different models of construction, finance, tenure, and integration with services. The pressure is not confined to lower-income regions. Within the higher-income resettlement States that host most of the world's resettlement programs, affordability is itself deteriorating. The OECD reports that, on average, one in three low-income tenant households across its member countries spend more than 40 percent of their disposable income on rent, with that share exceeding 50 percent in Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, Spain, and the United States.<sup>14</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing has linked these dynamics to underlying drivers including housing financialization, weak local government authority, and inadequate tax policies.<sup>15</sup>



Photo: Church World Service

<sup>14</sup> Affordable Housing. OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/affordable-housing.html> ; see also OECD Affordable Housing Database, Indicator HCI.2: Housing Costs over Income. <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/oecd-affordable-housing-database.html>

<sup>15</sup> UN expert urges action to end global affordable housing crisis. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 20 October 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/un-expert-urges-action-end-global-affordable-housing-crisis>

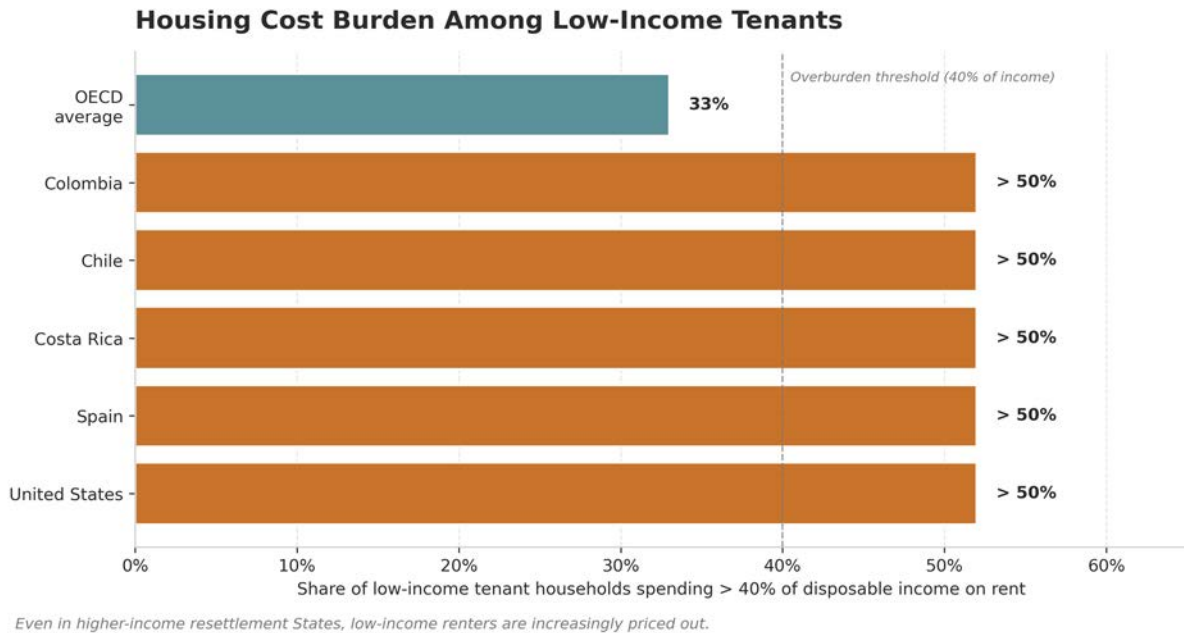


Figure 3. Housing cost burden among low-income tenants.

Sources: OECD Affordable Housing Database (HC1.2 — Housing costs over income).

Useful innovations already exist in many places. Modular and prefabricated housing, host-family and community-based accommodation, buffer-capacity reception models, mixed-tenure developments, and creative private-sector and architectural approaches are all being tested in different national contexts. What has been missing is a structured way to surface, compare, and adapt these innovations across borders, and to do so quickly enough to meet the rising need.

**The gap between the existence of promising models and their replication across resettlement States is what GRAWG's solutions-focused efforts target.**

## What GRAWG has Done

### The Solutions and Models Knowledge Base

GRAWG promotes innovative affordable accommodation and housing responses and solutions for refugees and other newly arrived persons by sharing new and promising approaches, models, and initiatives. In addition to discussing and promoting them among group members, GRAWG houses examples of potentially replicable solutions in a permanent space on the [GRAWG website](#) to further amplify their lessons learned for stakeholders worldwide. Efforts are ongoing to field submissions of additional accommodation and housing solutions from around the world, combining research by the GRAWG Secretariat with crowdsourced contributions.

### Showcasing Solutions Through Convenings

GRAWG's symposia and CRCP-linked sessions have been a primary vehicle for surfacing innovations. The inaugural 2024 symposium deliberately gathered non-resettlement actors such as architects, finance partners, and civil society newcomer welcome organizations to widen the field of relevant models.

At the CRCP 2024 Sydney Working Group, GRAWG showcased innovative housing projects from Sweden (Blick Arkitektur) and the United States (Launch Capital Partners) alongside panelists from Norway and Australia.

The CRCP 2025 Madrid Working Group sessions explored both accommodation solutions tied directly to resettlement and the central role of local authorities in housing and integration, drawing in municipal practitioners from Strängnäs, Barcelona, and Culemborg.

The CRCP 2025 Geneva session Building a Home for Refugees and Local Communities: Innovative Practices in Accommodation examined creative accommodation models and cross-sector approaches that foster inclusive communities and help shift public perceptions of refugees amid the global housing crisis, while identifying strategies to expand local accommodation capacity through partnerships across government, civil society, and the private sector.



## Refugee Housing Solutions as an Evidence Base

GRAWG also draws on the practical experience of its Secretariat, Church World Service (CWS). CWS's Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS) initiative was created in response to an acute U.S. national rental housing shortage that coincided with an increased need for access to affordable and dignified housing for refugees and other newcomers to the United States.

RHS facilitates dialogue and collaboration among multilevel government stakeholders and other cross-sectional partners, including the private sector and faith groups, with the aim of developing and initiating cohesive strategies alongside simultaneous practical pilots and projects to increase access to affordable safe, secure housing.

The program has expanded to all U.S. refugee resettlement populations and other newcomers entering the United States, and the lessons it has generated about adaptation, reimagining, and reuse of existing housing stock and cross-sector partnership flow directly into GRAWG's solution-oriented work.

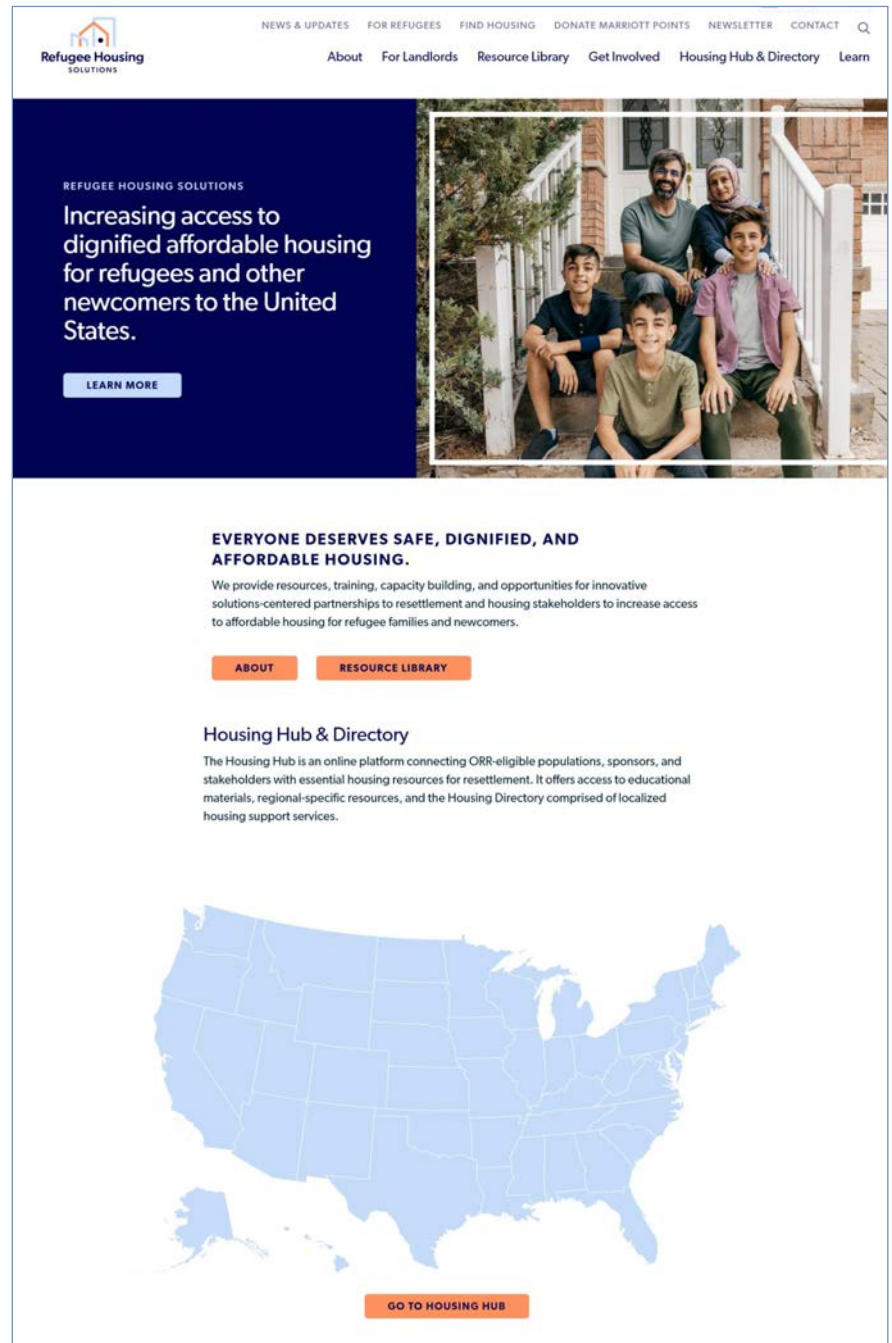


Image 2. Screenshot of the Refugee Housing Solutions website.

## Focus in the Current Landscape

The pivot to whole-of-route protection requires a wider menu of housing solutions than the resettlement system has historically curated. Refugees, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable migrants need safe, affordable, and decent housing in countries of origin, in transit, at borders, and in countries of asylum or onward settlement. The same shocks of funding cuts, lower quotas, changing policies, and varying arrival patterns also place a premium on housing models that can scale up and down quickly without becoming permanent emergency arrangements. GRAWG's current solutions work is being shaped around two new flagship products: the Whole-of-Route Case Study and Policy Framework.

### Whole-of-Route Case Study: Bosnia and Spain

GRAWG's case study tests the framework on the route itself. By pairing a transit country (Bosnia and Herzegovina) with an endpoint country (Spain), the study empirically examines which housing policies and solutions are deployed at two points along the route, where and why the failure modes appear, and which solutions would make housing better serve people moving along the whole route.

Taken together, the Bosnia–Spain case study and following policy framework mark GRAWG's shift from collecting innovative models to actively curating, comparing, and stress-testing them in the conditions that resettlement States and reception systems face today.



Photo: Adobe Stock

## The GRAWG Policy Framework: A Structured Menu of Housing Models

The April 2026 policy framework *Navigating Options, Avoiding Pitfalls* makes the menu of available housing models explicit. It sets out five model families and the conditions for each under which the model works best and the key considerations for implementation:

### **Modular and relocatable housing**

Purpose-built, prefabricated units that can be deployed quickly and relocated or repurposed; best suited to medium-term displacement (1–5 years), where land and planning approval are available and there is political interest in long-term reuse (for example as affordable or student housing), with early agreement on post-reception use and integration of services.

### **Host family and community-based accommodation**

Temporary accommodation with private households, supported through matching platforms and monitoring; best suited to early or sudden displacement phases in contexts with strong civil society engagement, with screening, safeguarding, and mediation capacity and clear expectations for hosts and guests.

### **Migrant resource and transit centers**

Short-term accommodation integrated with protection, health, and information services along migration routes; best suited to contexts with high and continuous transit flows and strong cooperation between governments and international actors, with compliance with humanitarian standards and a clear mandate and duration of stay.

### **Emergency surge and preparedness housing**

Pre-identified housing capacity that can be rapidly activated during sudden increases in arrivals; best suited to countries exposed to rapid inflow fluctuations and decentralized governance with municipal roles, requiring regular updating of housing inventories and clear activation and deactivation protocols.

### **Buffer capacity models**

Flexible reception places that can be scaled up or down depending on need; best suited to volatile asylum systems with strong central coordination and local agreements, requiring financial arrangements for standby capacity and planned reuse of facilities after deactivation.

The framework also introduces explicit surge and post-surge pathways, recognizing that housing systems must be designed for fluctuation, and a decision tree to guide model selection by arrival pattern, expected duration, available infrastructure, political sensitivity, and the nature of the flow. It documents common failure modes with concrete mitigations. The framework is intended as a living resource to be expanded with case studies, tools, and additional decision aids.

# An Evolving Scope

In 2025, the resettlement landscape shifted significantly. Housing affordability challenges remain, and GRAWG is adapting to meet them. GRAWG is analyzing comparative practice, practical learning, and global examples considering today's reality, marked by waning interest in third-country solutions and a growing emphasis on a whole-of-route approach to international protection. Resettlement programs in particular face existential challenges, and asylum systems are not far behind. Although GRAWG remains committed to resettlement as a viable large-scale solution, refugees will continue to need shelter and housing wherever they are along their journeys. GRAWG will therefore present models and solutions appropriate to different points along the route, including transit countries and third countries of asylum, while highlighting the specific constraints and opportunities in each context.

Across the three lines of work described above, four directions will guide GRAWG's next chapter.

1

**Fostering further inclusion and participation from resettlement stakeholders across the globe, while maintaining relationships within the current network**, to strike a fair balance between geography, the size of resettlement program, and type of engagement when it comes to housing solutions. This will be pursued through strategic networking, increased web and public presence, bilateral and multilateral meetings, and promotions at conferences, particularly the CRCP, with particular attention to broadening representation beyond the U.S./ European axis to include stakeholders from Africa, Asia, South America, and countries of first asylum.

2

**Cementing GRAWG as the leading platform for knowledge exchange on housing** to provide highly useful information to all types of programs and stakeholders, and to insert the issue of housing more regularly on the policy agenda. This will be pursued by continuing regular member meetings, organizing two to four solutions- and outcome-focused webinars and events per year on the most pressing housing issues, and engaging more actively with the UNHCR 2030 Roadmap and other housing policy frameworks.



3

**Becoming the go-to source of information on national and sub-national housing policies**, the most promising solutions, and the place where all stakeholders can turn to find suggested standards for housing that allow refugees from all walks of life to truly feel safe and at home in their new countries. This will be pursued through continued development and expansion of the authoritative Refugee Housing Journey Map; through briefs, memos, and op-eds with broad and engaging reach; and through development and promotion of suggested global housing minimum standards.

4

**Expanding GRAWG's thematic scope, while safeguarding knowledge of resettlement.** The heart of GRAWG lies in resettlement and will continue to do so. Recognizing that resettlement programs are facing existential challenges, GRAWG will seek to safeguard existing knowledge within programs so that it can be consulted if and when these programs scale back up, while also addressing the housing issue through broader lenses. The expanded thematic scope will include, but not be limited to, housing for asylum seekers, along-the-route housing challenges and solutions, housing alternatives to immigration detention, and other vulnerable groups who share similar challenges to refugees. Permanent Co-Chair CWS is in a unique position, having vast experience with many kinds of situations of forced displacement and catastrophes across the globe.

## Building on Progress, Adapting to Change: Continuing to Advance Refugee Accommodation and Housing

Accommodation and housing remain central to protection, inclusion, and the pursuit of solutions. As GRAWG has shown in this report, the global housing crisis and changing international protection landscape continue to create new pressures across resettlement, asylum, and along-the-route contexts. In this environment, sustained exchange, practical learning, and adaptable responses are essential. Since its establishment, GRAWG developed into a recognized platform for bringing together stakeholders across sectors and regions to strengthen knowledge, identify promising practices, and advance effective housing responses for refugees and other displaced people.

Moving forward, GRAWG will continue to evolve in step with changing needs, operational realities, and policy environments, all while remaining grounded in its core commitment to refugee accommodation and housing. This includes highlighting lessons learned from resettlement systems, safeguarding knowledge developed through those systems, and adapting that knowledge to inform responses in countries of asylum, transit settings, and other contexts along the route. Through continued collaboration among governments, INGOs, civil society, academia, and local community actors, GRAWG will remain a practical forum for advancing accommodation and housing as an essential component of protection and durable solutions.



# Appendix & References

## Selected GRAWG Resources

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- Refugee Housing Journey Map: [map.refugeeaccommodation.org](https://map.refugeeaccommodation.org)
- Solutions and Models Knowledge Base: [refugeeaccommodation.org/solutions-and-models](https://refugeeaccommodation.org/solutions-and-models)
- Navigating Options, Avoiding Pitfalls (April 2026 Policy Framework): [refugeeaccommodation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/GRAWG-policy-framework-04.2026.pdf](https://refugeeaccommodation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/GRAWG-policy-framework-04.2026.pdf)

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# About GRAWG

The Global Refugee Accommodation Working Group (GRAWG) was born during the 2023 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP), formerly known as the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR). Stakeholders from across the globe observed that housing was one of the most pressing issues for resettlement States, yet prior to 2023 housing had not been a dedicated focus within the CRCP or any other high-level global forum on resettlement. To raise the visibility of this issue and begin to address it, Church World Service (CWS), with the support of the 2023 CRCP co-chairs (the Government of Ireland's Irish Refugee Protection Programme, or IRPP, and Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre in partnership with UNHCR), issued a global call to action at the plenary session of the 2023 ATCR to establish a dedicated task force on housing.

Since 1995, the ATCR — renamed CRCP in 2023 — has served as a multilateral forum for UNHCR, States, NGOs, the private sector, academia, and refugees, convening annually to address refugee resettlement. In 2020, a Steering Committee was created to gather and submit reform proposals to the ATCR, and one of those recommendations was to create opportunities for strategic priorities identified at CRCP meetings to be explored within current or new working groups and task forces. Housing for refugees emerged through this process as a shared concern among States, NGOs, and refugee-led stakeholders, and following the 2023 plenary, CWS and Ireland became the inaugural co-chairs of the new task force. In November 2023, the task force held its first meeting, during which it adopted its terms of reference and formal name: the Global Refugee Accommodation Working Group.

Although GRAWG emerged through the CRCP process and continues to play a significant role within it, the working group has evolved into a standing body with its own program of member meetings, webinars, symposia, and related activities beyond CRCP convenings. Since 2023, GRAWG has steadily grown its membership and established itself as the go-to platform for stakeholders seeking models, new ways of thinking, and effective solutions to the problem of finding safe, affordable, and decent housing for resettled refugees and other newly arrived persons across the globe.

## **Mission**

GRAWG leads global cross-sector coordination, communication, and collaboration to identify and innovate opportunities to address refugee accommodation and housing challenges.

## **Purpose**

To ensure cross-sector global coordination, communication, and collaboration to identify and innovate opportunities to address refugee accommodation and housing challenges. To pursue its purpose, group leaders undertake the following activities: convene key sectoral stakeholders globally in a forum that meets regularly for sharing and learning; promote innovative affordable accommodation and housing responses and solutions for refugees and other newly arrived persons in countries beyond their own; use a real-time, interactive communication platform and protocols for the Working Group and sub-groups; and use an information-data platform to track global accommodation and housing information, challenges, solutions, opportunities, and successful initiatives.

## **Scope**

The Working Group initiates regular GRAWG meetings on a shared workspace for the Group's conversations, consultations, continuing education, and training; with UNHCR support and concurrence, initiates other accommodation- and housing-related conversations and consultations for (1) all resettlement States — large and small alike, (2) academia, and (3) the NGO/non-profit sector; regularly reviews accommodation and housing challenges and needs (both temporary and long-term) and identifies ways to improve the situation for refugees by sharing best-practice ideas, innovations, and solutions; monitors the interactive communications platform; and shares analyzed data as relevant.

## Leadership and Members

GRAWG is led by Church World Service as permanent Co-Chair and Secretariat, and it was formally co-chaired alongside the Government of Ireland (the Irish Refugee Protection Programme). Both were inaugural and foundational co-chairs for two years during the launch and buildup of GRAWG. CWS remains the permanent Co-Chair and Secretariat of the working group, leading activities such as developing annual project outcomes, website maintenance, and meeting facilitation, and is actively seeking the support of a State Co-Chair to increase visibility, credibility, and reach among other State actors. As of May 2026, GRAWG is in the process of identifying a new government Co-Chair following the two-year term served by the Government of Ireland.

Members of GRAWG include participating resettlement State agencies from around the world, UNHCR, and local and international NGOs involved in resettlement efforts, with more than 18 countries represented. Members attend different types of convenings (either virtual or in-person) annually, including symposia and webinars. GRAWG continuously adds country involvement through the expression-of-interest form on its website, and has to date drawn representation from Ireland, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Australia, Spain, Japan, Portugal, France, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Canada, Switzerland, the United States of America, Argentina, and New Zealand.



[refugeeaccommodation.org](https://refugeeaccommodation.org)