
**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

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Solutions**Summary**

This paper provides an update on the progress and challenges as well as efforts of UNHCR and the international community to achieve solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons since the conference room paper on Solutions (EC/73/SC/CRP.13) was presented at the eighty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2022. While achieving durable solutions remains elusive for the vast majority of forcibly displaced persons some progress has been made, such as the cessation of refugee status for Ivorian refugees, the establishment of a fourth regional support platform and the Third-Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030. Last year, the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges sought to identify opportunities to broaden and bolster development cooperation between humanitarian, development, peace actors and international financial institutions as well as host countries and countries of origin as a way to support conditions in areas of origin and strengthen human capital critical to the success of any solution. The paper concludes highlighting the opportunity which the 2023 Global Refugee Forum provides for States and stakeholders to unlock opportunities for solutions.

I. Overview of progress and challenges in achieving solutions

1. In 2022, political instability, security challenges, lack of services and livelihoods, compounded by the impact of climate change, continued to impede the return of forcibly displaced persons. Of the 103 million forcibly displaced worldwide, about 6 per cent were able to return home. Only 1 per cent of the total refugee population returned, highlighting the protractedness of many displacement situations.

2. There have been some achievements in the search for solutions. One example is the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Côte d'Ivoire, which led to the invocation of the cessation clause for them in June 2022. By the end of the year, about 96 per cent of refugees had returned to Côte d'Ivoire, ending one of the most protracted refugee situations in West Africa.

3. The Third-Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030¹ expands on the Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways and reaffirms resettlement as a critical protection tool, particularly for those at risk. The roadmap also reinforces multi-stakeholder commitments to protecting refugees through the expansion of family reunification and complementary pathways.

4. UNHCR's advocacy of more resettlement places resulted in an increase in quotas provided by States for 2022. Despite this progress, less than 8 per cent of the 1.47 million refugees in need of resettlement were able to access this solution, and quotas for future years remain unknown. Collaboration on multi-year planning in the context of wider protection and solutions planning is underway but will need significant State support to succeed.

5. UNHCR completed an evaluation² to assess its support for voluntary repatriation and reintegration. The evaluation identified areas for improvement, including comprehensive context analysis, effective monitoring of returnee needs, needs-based planning, enhanced refugee participation, refined advocacy strategies, multi-stakeholder engagement, fortified regional and national agreements and improved knowledge management.

6. Despite the complex challenges of government coordination, restrictive policies and lengthy naturalization processes, commitments to the Global Compact on Refugees and other initiatives have driven significant progress in promoting effective local integration for specific refugee populations. In Mexico, strategic cooperation agreements between UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have played a crucial role in facilitating naturalization applications. In Liberia, engagement by development actors has supported legal integration, where the World Bank's dedicated Window for Host Communities and Refugees enabled the issuance of permanent residence permits free of charge to former Ivorian refugees. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, efforts have focused on ensuring access to land for livelihoods to promote socioeconomic integration alongside legal residency.

7. In addition to pursuing durable solutions, the current global displacement crisis also necessitates a concerted effort to expand local and third-country solutions. Supporting inclusion, building resilience and strengthening human capital are a necessary foundation for the success of any solution. The Global Compact on Refugees reflects this orientation. It emphasizes strengthening the human capital of refugees and host communities and promotes investing in institutional capacities through inclusive development policies and opening up migration and labour mobility pathways to refugees. In this regard, a critical tool for facilitating solutions is the widespread availability and acceptance of travel documents that provide refugees with the right to leave and return to their countries of asylum safely, without putting them at risk of refoulement.

¹ Available at <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/compact-action/initiatives/expanding-third-country-solutions>.

² Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/media/es/2022/04-evaluation-unhcrs-repatriation-programmes-and-activities-2015-2021>.

II. Supporting conditions in countries and areas of origin

8. Despite the broader challenges and constraints related to repatriation, progress has been made in certain countries. Since 2017, in collaboration with various stakeholders, UNHCR has facilitated voluntary repatriation for over 207,000 Burundian refugees, primarily from the United Republic of Tanzania to Burundi, where the conditions for return have improved considerably. In November 2022, the Government of Burundi and UNHCR organized a high-level roundtable meeting with development actors to enhance access to essential services and livelihoods, promote greater self-reliance among refugees and advocate for the integration of returnees into the national development plans.

9. In 2022, UNHCR strengthened partnerships with regional political entities. In the East and Horn of Africa region, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's solutions initiative for Sudan and South Sudan supported the inclusion of refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees in national dialogues to ensure their perspectives are included in national development and peacebuilding strategies and plans. Regional approaches continued through the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and in Latin America, the *Marco Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones* (known as MIRPS in Spanish). Building on the Yaoundé Declaration of April 2022, a fourth platform was launched by UNHCR, involving seven governments and stakeholders to address displacement in the Central African Republic to mobilize support for durable solutions, including voluntary returns and reintegration, and effective refugee inclusion.

10. In the Asia-Pacific region, UNHCR intensified efforts to find solutions for 93,000 Sri Lankan refugees in protracted displacement in India by advocating pathways to local integration for those choosing to assimilate. UNHCR also addressed deep-seated challenges faced by Sri Lankan returnees with regard to housing, land, and property through training programmes for public officers and awareness campaigns on land rights and referral mechanisms, benefiting 1,124 individuals.

11. In Afghanistan, UNHCR and its partners continued to build on development gains in 80 priority areas of return and reintegration by improving access to health, education and livelihoods for 3.2 million Afghans. Microfinance loans for returnees and internally displaced persons were provided in partnership with the First Microfinance Bank of Afghanistan and the Aga Khan Development Network. The Quadripartite Steering Committee of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees reaffirmed the focus on protection and solutions for displaced Afghans, with priority given to the creation of conditions enabling sustainable return and reintegration in Afghanistan.

12. Between 2016 and 2022, 354,000 Syrian refugees returned home from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye. UNHCR and its partners strengthened preparedness and planning for returns, guided by the Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Strategy³ and the Global Compact on Refugees. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNHCR provided returning refugees and other vulnerable people with humanitarian assistance and other services through a network of community centres. In parallel, a dialogue is underway with the Syrian Government and other stakeholders to address obstacles to voluntary return.

13. In 2022, some 5.8 million internally displaced persons returned to their places of origin – an increase of 10 per cent (600,000) from the previous year. UNHCR continued to promote durable solutions from the onset and undertook a multi-stakeholder approach in countries such as Ethiopia and Ukraine to enable informed decision-making on solutions and to integrate solutions programming into cluster coordination and other processes. UNHCR remains committed to promoting solutions firmly rooted in protection and informed by data-driven analysis. In Cameroon, UNHCR supported the Government's upcoming census via data collection on internally displaced persons and returnees.

14. UNHCR works closely with authorities and the international community to create conditions for safe, dignified and sustainable returns through area-based approaches. These approaches promote social cohesion and engagement of local authorities and development actors for protection and solutions. To further this goal, UNHCR has strengthened its

³ Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/63223>.

collaboration with UNDP through the Global Cooperation Framework on Inclusion and Solutions (2023-2025), and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) through the Framework of Engagement.

15. In South Sudan, Pockets of Hope is an area-based initiative that aims to enhance living conditions and access to services in communities to which many displaced people return, with the support of government authorities, development partners and peace actors. The initiative implements community-level needs assessments and projects that support sustainable livelihoods opportunities, economic self-reliance and peaceful coexistence, promoting sustainable development in these communities, in line with the draft South Sudan durable solutions strategy.

16. In 2022, UNHCR utilized a data-driven approach to guide its commitment to effective support for inclusion and planning for refugee return. In the Central African Republic, UNHCR is collaborating with the World Bank to conduct comprehensive assessments on service availability and school capacity to support the return of refugees. Furthermore, UNHCR is conducting assessments in South Sudan to anticipate and address additional needs that may arise from refugee returns.

III. Building resilience and inclusion

17. In 2022, UNHCR deepened its partnership with the World Bank to support policy and investment opportunities in 16 low-income refugee-hosting countries to enhance refugee protection and promote inclusion and solutions. UNHCR assesses and monitors refugee protection policies to direct investment towards economic and social inclusion of refugees and host communities. Since 2017, the partnership with the International Development Association's Window for Host Communities and Refugees has facilitated \$3.6 billion in investments. The Global Concessional Financing Facility allocated \$755 million in grants to unlock over \$6.1 billion in concessional loans for five middle-income countries since 2016, supporting refugees' inclusion in education, healthcare, and livelihoods.

18. In Uganda, the Window for Host Communities and Refugees is supporting the gradual transition from parallel humanitarian systems to national education, health and water systems. In Mauritania, the partnership between UNHCR, the World Bank and Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development has made significant progress towards ensuring that refugees have access to healthcare services on an equal basis with the host community, improving the overall health outcomes of refugees and host communities.

19. In the Americas region, support for refugee inclusion pathways is ongoing. In Mexico, 28,500 refugees were relocated to 11 destinations through a local integration programme, contributing \$8 million to national tax revenue. In Brazil, UNHCR and IOM supported the integration of 95,000 relocated Venezuelans into 850 municipalities as part of the government's strategy. A survey carried out among relocated people showed they had improved access to formal jobs, housing and education programmes, with eight out of ten adults finding employment or starting their own businesses.

20. In Argentina, UNHCR collaborated with central and local governments, development actors and the private sector to promote durable solutions and socioeconomic integration for refugees and asylum-seekers in host communities. The Cities of Solidarity and Community Sponsorship initiatives provided a platform for stimulating State-owned initiatives and fostering coordination with community-based refugee and migrant associations, supporting the socioeconomic integration of refugees and asylum-seekers.

21. In Ecuador, UNHCR, the Global Compact Network Ecuador and the programme *Sin Fronteras* launched the inclusive company seal which recognizes companies that employ refugees. To date, 62 companies have received this recognition. In Costa Rica, 30 companies were awarded for their efforts to promote inclusion and integration. In Chile, the inclusive market initiative supported commercialization of products and services offered by refugees and migrants, benefitting 330 refugees and asylum-seekers who also received aid from government social protection programmes.

22. In Poland, the adoption of a law on assistance to Ukrainian refugees facilitated their inclusion in Polish society from the emergency onset. Some 1.5 million refugees were granted Polish personal identity numbers and included in national services with health care and social benefits on par with nationals. Some 900,000 refugees accessed employment by February 2023 and over 190,000 Ukrainian children and 400 Ukrainian teachers were included in the education system. Poland provides scholarships for Ukrainian students and academics and facilitates access to online education.

23. The Government of Zimbabwe has taken steps to include refugees in national land reform by distributing land to marginalized communities, including refugees, to promote self-reliance. In 2022, some 150 hectares of arable land for sustainable livelihood projects were allocated around the Tongogara refugee camp, to refugees as well as to host communities, to promote co-existence and synergies.

24. In Kenya, the formal recognition of the Pemba people as an ethnic community has resolved their stateless status. Registration and issuance of individual citizenship documentation enables them to fully engage in society and have access to the same rights as nationals, including education, healthcare, social protection, financial services and access to the formal labour market.

25. In May 2022, 36 cities worldwide announced their intentions to provide services and programmes for refugees and migrants, responding to the call to local action to implement the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration. This announcement was made on the sidelines of the first International Migration Review Forum. The first report on local action for migrants and refugees in 2022 highlighted 29 local initiatives expanding employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

26. UNHCR successfully advocated regulatory frameworks allowing formal access of refugees to financial services in Djibouti, Ecuador, Peru, South Africa and Zambia. It also promoted extending loans for refugee entrepreneurship for the first time, partnering with microfinance institutions and development financial institutions in 12 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Peru, Rwanda, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia). In Uganda, the blended finance programme supported by UNHCR, the Swedish International Development Cooperation and Grameen Credit Agricole Foundation reached over 79,000 refugee and host entrepreneurs during 2022 with loans and other services, including education and business training.

27. In 2022, UNHCR implemented innovative projects to mitigate the impact of climate change and reduce its environmental footprint while strengthening emergency preparedness and response capabilities. In Southern Africa, investments were made in reforestation, clean cooking, solar energy and shelter. UNHCR co-hosted a regional roundtable with the National Disasters Management Institute in Mozambique, resulting in the development of a regional climate action plan to support rights-based climate-resilience. In addition, UNHCR assisted the Southern African Development Community in developing a disaster displacement framework.

28. The above-mentioned examples illustrate UNHCR's collaborative efforts with governments and partners to include displaced and stateless individuals in national systems, financial services and the labor market. This approach aims to provide sustainable multi-sectoral access, improving their protection, human capital and future socioeconomic opportunities. Additionally, it emphasizes the enhancement of national systems to better serve all populations, aligning with the Global Compact on Refugees and the Sustainable Development Goals.

IV. Third-country solutions

29. Despite significant challenges, the vision of the *Third-Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030* remains ambitious; by 2030, provide three million refugees with third-country solutions through resettlement (1 million), and complementary pathways and family reunification (2 million). UNHCR is working with partners on improved and safe access of refugees to such opportunities for all.

30. In 2022, 93 UNHCR offices submitted applications on behalf of over 116,000 refugees to 25 States for resettlement, an 84 per cent increase from 2021. Some 13 per cent of submissions were made on an urgent or emergency basis due to specific protection needs. The principal nationalities included refugees originating from the Syrian Arab Republic (37,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (26,000), Afghanistan (12,000), Myanmar (9,000), and Eritrea (4,000).

31. The effects of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as conflict in Afghanistan and Ukraine, strained capacity and impacted resettlement efforts. Over 57,000 refugees departed to 20 different countries, representing a 49 per cent increase compared to 2021, but falling short of the roadmap target of 90,000 for the year. The largest number of UNHCR-facilitated resettlement departures were to the United States of America (22,000), Canada (11,000), Germany (5,000), Sweden (5,000), and France (3,000). Nearly one thousand people were evacuated from Libya to emergency transit mechanisms in Niger and Rwanda in 2022. The Growing Solutions and Funding for Refugees project supported resettlement of 16 refugees to Argentina.

32. UNHCR continues to engage with States and other key stakeholders to strengthen partnerships, including through the annual tripartite consultations on resettlement and its related refugee advisory group, as well as the priority situations core group. Support to States to strengthen their capacity to establish or expand third-country solutions continued, including with tools developed under the sustainable resettlement and complementary pathways initiative.

33. UNHCR pursued a protection-sensitive approach to development of complementary pathways by promoting the agency of refugees. It also engaged with the global task forces on refugee labour mobility⁴ and third country education pathways,⁵ whose goal is to level the playing field so that qualified refugees can access opportunities.

34. UNHCR supported the design and launch of education-focused programmes in Belgium, France and Ireland. It convened the first International Forum on Complementary Pathways which brought together the private sector, academia, refugees and governments at the International Humanitarian Law Institute of San Remo. A framework for the provision of loans to help refugees access education and job opportunities was launched in collaboration with Pathway Club⁶. The UNHCR Opportunities platform, which assists refugees in finding accredited higher education and professional development, is being updated and will be relaunched in 2023.

35. The Family Reunification Network enhanced cooperation between States and partners in developing the responses to the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine, contributing to emerging best practices to improve access to family reunification. However, existing costs and documentation requirements, among other barriers, continue to prevent families from being reunited.

36. Accurate data related to admission through complementary pathways remains a significant challenge for UNHCR, States and other partners. UNHCR and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development continue to collaborate with a view to strengthening the evidence base for the availability and use of complementary pathways.

V. Conclusion

37. The December 2022 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges⁷ was a significant milestone in emphasizing the importance of development cooperation for driving sustainable solutions. It closely aligned with the High Commissioner's Strategic

⁴ Available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/mandate/corporate-initiatives/global-task-force-refugee-labour-mobility.html>.

⁵ Available at <https://edpathways.org/>.

⁶ Available at <https://pathwayclub.org/>.

⁷ Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/media/2022-high-commissioners-dialogue-outcome-document-dialogue-action-english>.

Directions for 2022-2026, which prioritize accessing asylum, documentation and strengthening agency, while fostering stronger partnerships for development and peace engagement in responses to displacement and statelessness. . The dialogue underscored the importance of comprehensive solutions that benefit both host communities and displaced persons in the long term, such as community-driven approaches through area-based strategies, support for education and vocational training to prepare for returns, and government-led legal reforms. Regional support platforms and multi-stakeholder coalitions were identified as key tools for addressing the underlying causes of displacement and facilitating durable solutions. As we approach the second Global Refugee Forum, it is essential that we continue to prioritize lasting solutions for displaced and stateless individuals. By leveraging the potential of the Global Compact on Refugees and redoubling our commitment to robust development and peace partnerships, we can develop effective strategies to address displacement and statelessness.
