

InterAction Refugee Policy Working Group Key Messages
UNHCR Thematic Discussion 4
“Measures to be Taken in Pursuit of Durable Solutions”

The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) of the New York Declaration recognizes that “millions of refugees around the world at present have no access to timely and durable solutions.” People fleeing life-threatening situations, regardless of where they are born, deserve the chance to live in dignity and achieve their full potential. To address the global displacement crisis, which stands at a historic high of 66 million people, countries must share leadership, resources, and responsibility for durable solutions.

In recent years, however, steps have been taken backward in the pursuit of durable solutions for refugees. Political gridlock and the lack of sustained diplomatic effort to end conflict and mitigate its impact on civilians continues to create new refugee caseloads and limits the number of refugees able to return home; in 2015, only 1% of refugees went back to their home countries. Furthermore, states that have traditionally resettled refugees from around the world have significantly curtailed their commitments, including the United States – the leading resettlement nation — which is set to admit the lowest number of refugees in over three decades in 2018.

The “Programme of Action” should be bold in tracking and monitoring commitments from Member States—whether financial, technical, or regarding the number of refugees they pledge to resettle—to ensure that this downward trajectory halts and the international community moves forward in pursuing adequate and more abundant durable solutions for the world’s refugees.

The following are recommendations for Member States, the United Nations and other actors on pursuing durable solutions for inclusion in the “Programme of Action”:

Voluntary Return

- Address the root causes of forced migration to support safe and dignified conditions for the voluntary return of refugees to their countries of origin - including using diplomatic channels and engaging local civil society groups, local government, and community stakeholders to pursue peace. Work tirelessly to mitigate the impact of conflict on civilians, hold actors accountable for violating human rights, while also addressing governance, environmental and economic crises that give rise to refugee flows.
- Safeguard the voluntariness of refugee return and adhere to the principle of *non-refoulement*. Maintain high-quality asylum in host countries to prevent involuntary and premature repatriations and stringently monitor asylum conditions to ensure returns are not occurring due to diminishing protection space.

Local Solutions

- Implement naturalization or, at a minimum, permanent residency for refugees in host countries.
- Reinforce the rights of refugees and migrants to access quality education, employment and health services, including upholding 2016 Leaders’ Summit on Refugees pledges. Develop plans with clear pathways for refugees to obtain work permits.

- Accept and facilitate applications from refugees for civil registration, including recording births, deaths, marriages and divorces within national registries.
- Support a political commitment to provide all refugee children, regardless of status, with quality education within 30 days of arrival. At least 3.7 million school-age refugee children have no school to attend.
- Reject refugee warehousing, phase out refugee camps and untie refugee services from residency in specific locations.

Monitoring of and Accountability for Commitments

- Develop responsibility-sharing plans for each refugee crisis (see [InterAction's submission](#) for Thematic Discussion #1). Plans should then be carefully tracked, regarding both steps host countries take to improve the protection environment for refugees and commitments made by donor states and international institutions for financing, technical support, and resettlement slots.
- Call for a global tracking mechanism for commitments made at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in 2016, including those made by host states to provide education and work opportunities to refugees.

Funding Levels and Other Forms of Support to Address Displacement

- Develop unified donor schemes to generate employment in host countries.
- Pledge additional financial support for refugee resettlement and other durable solutions.
- Better align bilateral/multilateral humanitarian and development financing to address long-term displacement. Provide significantly-increased multi-year funding to meet refugee and host community needs.
- Invest in building a sound and common evidence-base upon which joint responses to support durable solutions can be developed. Utilize existing regional platforms, such as the [Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat](#) in the Horn and East Africa, to better coordinate joint analysis of, and early planning for, durable solutions.

Refugee Resettlement

Expand access to refugee resettlement and durable complementary pathways that are non-discriminatory, prioritize vulnerability, and address protection needs of refugees for whom local integration or voluntary return is not possible.

- The proposed 10% of national resettlement caseloads for emergency cases, including those with urgent or serious medical needs, is the absolute minimum required to ensure meaningful protection to those with specific needs.
- States with existing refugee resettlement programs must significantly scale up their commitments to meet the growing need and share responsibility for refugees globally. They must also lend technical assistance and exchange best practices with states that do not yet have existing or well-established resettlement programs.
- The most vulnerable refugees must continue to be resettled first. States should not resettle refugees according to other criteria (including demographics, religious background, and skills possessed) to ensure resettlement remains a non-discriminatory protection mechanism for those who need it most.

- Complementary pathways must be created to expand durable solutions, but they should not be time-limited or tied to a specific program of study, employer or employment opportunity. Complementary pathways cannot replace protection-based resettlement, especially when considering the difficulty of ensuring that some complementary pathways (such as labor mobility schemes) are truly protection-sensitive. States opting to admit refugees through alternative mechanisms to traditional resettlement (e.g. humanitarian admissions, expanded family reunion, medical evacuation programs, student visas, refugee access to labor migration schemes) must meet minimum protection needs and administer complementary admissions as additional to—not in lieu of—resettlement.
- Refugees who may not be prioritized for resettlement by UNHCR should have the opportunity to benefit from complementary admissions schemes if these pathways guarantee minimum protection safeguards, which should:
 - Guarantee *non-refoulement* and other rights under international refugee and human rights law;
 - Ensure access to appropriate identity and travel documents;
 - Preserve family unity;
 - Avoid statelessness of children born in-territory;
 - Guarantee re-admission to the first state of asylum if admission is temporary;
 - Address refugees' vulnerabilities to all forms of exploitation and abuse, especially in the case of temporary labor mobility programs;
 - Ensure access to a permanent solution.