



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Tuesday, October 17th, 2017

Under Secretary General Jagan Chapagain

Towards a global compact on refugees: *Thematic Discussion 2 “Measures to be taken at the onset of a large movement of refugees”*

Panel one: how can we ensure better preparedness for and rapid responses to large movements of refugees?

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Room XVII

Co-chairs: Mr. George Okoth-Obbo, Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) and Ambassador Hassan Simba Yahya, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, United Republic of Tanzania

Expected time for delivery: 7 minutes

Panelists included: United Kingdom, Turkey and Germany

This panel will consider ways in which the program of action could build capacity to ensure rapid and predictable international support for receiving countries and regions as part of the initiation of a comprehensive refugee response, including through:

1. Measures to strengthen needs assessment, planning and preparedness;
2. Standby structures for rapid response;
3. Predictable surge support;
4. Enhanced assistance to receiving States and communities.



1***

The IFRC and the Global Compact on Refugee –

The Red Cross Red Crescent is intimately and practically involved with migrants and refugees, worldwide, at a time of unprecedented displacement.

Today sees the highest number of displaced people globally since the end of the Second World War.

When people are outside their own country – whether as migrants or refugees or internally displaced persons – the IFRC and its National Societies are present where they can be, in trying to help them at every stage of that journey ...

...for this reason, **the IFRC welcomes and acknowledges UNHCR’s leadership to develop a Global Compact on Refugees**, through the development of a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) together with a plan of action to facilitate its implementation on the ground.

... It is indeed critical that we bring the reality of what happens on the ground to mainstream consciousness, so that we provide a more conducive environment for refugees. Refugees can no longer be “warehoused” in refugee camps for generations. They need to have a life; they need to be able to move freely; they need to have access to work and education. **They should be adequately supported in this effort and treated with dignity.**

.... whenever needed, our National Societies stand ready to support the rolling out of the CRRF in each of the 11 case study countries ¹. As such, we are encouraged by **Uganda’s Red**

¹ Uganda, Tanzania, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Honduras, Mexico, El Salvador, Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala.



Cross active participation in the drafting of the Terms of Reference for the establishment of the CRRF Secretariat in Uganda, and is of the view that the CRRF will help the country move forward on its goals to integrate the work of various line ministries towards refugees into a whole-of-government approach.

2***

The important role of local actors

The work of the Ugandan Red Cross and other National Societies in supporting refugee response is emblematic of the crucial role of local and national actors, including refugee lead organizations.

...We know that local actors have a distinct added value in humanitarian response: Local actors are fast because they are close. Local actors often have access that no international actor can achieve. Local actors have a strong understanding of local circumstances, politics and culture. Local action should not be a “nice to have” add on to a relief operation that is a distant second consideration to getting aid out – it is a critical (though not the exclusive) vehicle for that lifesaving action.

...However, we also know that international actors can either promote and enhance the capacities of local actors to provide a quality, sustainable principled response, or can undermine this capacity. This happens when we fail to respect the actors that are there, and treat them as contractors instead of partners, often requiring them to subsidize operations. It is essential that we focus on supporting the institutional capacity of local and national actors. We need to invest in advance of future crises both in the functional and operational capacity of local government and civil society actors, to ensure that they are not overwhelmed by a sudden influx of emergency relief funds.



....Capacity strengthening work should be led by local and national actors themselves, defining what they need and how. Provision of core funding is essential, as is support for financial management, domestic resource mobilization, project management, accountability and reporting, and good governance, not just technical expertise linked to specific projects.

3***

Enabling regulatory environment (laws, policies and plans) to better enable and complement local action and inclusive community empowerment.

A critical part of preparedness is to ensure that an enabling legal framework is in place to facilitate a rapid response to crises, which also **strengthens and harnesses the role of local actors, and in particular the role of governments.**

....This includes clearly mandating roles, responsibilities and adequate resources at the national and local levels, while at the same time removing unnecessary legal barriers, or 'red-tape', to swiftly and effectively facilitate an international response effort, if and when required.

....The IFRC has been working for over 10 years, in more than 100 countries, to strengthen domestic legal frameworks to facilitate responses to large-scale emergencies, in line with international humanitarian standards. While this work has typically focused on situations of natural disasters, the legal barriers that can emerge, especially with regards to the facilitation of goods and personnel, are not unique to these types of emergencies.



....Indeed, **they can and do extend to situations of mass-migration and displacement.** Current crises, such as the emergency response in Bangladesh, are examples of situations where the needs are acute and the task of finding a balance between facilitating and regulating a response is paramount.

....It is therefore crucial to consider the relevant legal frameworks in place, where there are gaps, and how these may help or hinder a response. **IFRC's policy and operations teams are working closely together to support National Societies and governments to overcome these issues.**

4***

IFRC's experience from its Emergency Response Framework: the specific example of Bangladesh

....I now wish to contextualise some of our main findings when it comes to better preparedness for and rapid responses to large movements of refugees while drawing on the example of the recent crises of people from Rakhine moving into Bangladesh:

...The IFRC launched an appeal in December last year, primarily for the movement of people that we were witnessing then but also in response to our analysis that suggested a much larger movement of people would occur. We wanted to count on available funding when we would need to scale up quickly.

....Since then, the IFRC has been sharing its analysis with the international community about the increasingly degrading situation and its severe concerns with regards to protection and assistance needs of the thousands of people who have fled from Rakhine to Bangladesh.



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...Having the original appeal in place allowed us to scale up quickly. We had established a strong working relationship with the Bangladesh Red Crescent branch in Cox's Bazar (through the deployment of an Operations Manager in June) and local authorities and through that trust and support we were able to quadruple the amount appealed for in August to CHF 12 million and we are now looking to at least double that again in the coming weeks.

...As a result, the IFRC has supported the Bangladesh Red Crescent to reach **214,611 people with 66,620 litres of safe water; 5,165 medical visits and 562,946 kilograms of food.**

...Like UN agencies, the IFRC has an Emergency Response Framework which provides us with an overarching frame for the alignment of tools and systems related to emergency response. Our tools and systems do not distinguish between hurricanes and mass movement of people, but instead is based on scale, complexity and risk. For the IFRC, the population movement in Bangladesh is now classified as 'Red' – our highest level.

...The IFRC is a decentralised organisation, with regional offices bearing overall accountability for responses in their remit. However, a red category crisis means that our headquarters takes on a stronger role in terms of global coherence and compliance with standards and that our global surge capacity is activated.

...In Bangladesh, we now have in a place a dedicated Head of Emergency Operations as well as a Regional Disaster Response Team, a Field Assessment and Coordination Team members with specific expertise including Protection, Community Engagement and for the first time an ICRC Restoring Family Links member. With our partner National Societies, we now have four health and WASH Emergency Response Units in place



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which includes a 60 bed field hospital (that has surgical capacity) that as of yesterday is receiving patients. BDRCS has also deployed large number of volunteers and staff to run the operation.

...This for us is an example of how the Movement comes together, the **IFRC, the ICRC and 26 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies** are now supporting the Bangladesh Red Crescent operations; ...Bangladesh Red Crescent midwives **delivered their first baby** in Hakimpara camp's mobile medical clinic last week (10 October) – a healthy baby girl.

... The field hospital is able to support the whole spectrum of health issues from injuries sadly sustained on the journey to complicated pregnancies. Volunteers are also working with people in the camps to raise awareness of the **WHO-led cholera vaccination campaign**. We are also providing **thousands of hygiene kits** and our expert teams are working around the clock to provide clean water and sanitation in the camps.

5***

Social inclusion as a key component of a response to any displacement...

Within the IFRC, we benefit from a wide experience helping vulnerable communities such as refugees to build their own resilience. It builds on the experience that we and other organizations have with participatory assessment and extends the approach to helping communities identify resilience solutions and create action plans that draw on local resources and make the best use of national and international assistance.

....These participatory assessments should also include host communities. Many National Societies have shared their



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experiences that the most effective way to cultivate a common attitude and relationship of respect between refugees and receiving communities is to cultivate connections between people and this is being seen so acutely in Bangladesh right now. Accordingly, there are a range of National Societies' programmes supporting inter-community exchanges, through schools and social events where refugees and other members of the community can meet to get to know each other and break down barriers.

... These programmes emphasize the value, talent and contribution that migrants can bring to societies and the positive opportunities that global migration presents.

... Our National Societies' social inclusion programmes are also aimed at countering xenophobia, discrimination and marginalization. Awareness raising activities have been developed for the public and in schools to promote respect for diversity and counter intolerance, prejudice and discrimination through education and campaign materials, focused on cultivating and understanding between the local host population on the realities of all individual experience and the challenges faced by migrants and refugees.

....National Societies also support the integration of refugee children into school, with homework support and tailored buddy systems for children and young people. In countries of resettlement, services such as these are often provided in an initial package of services for newly-resettled refugees (e.g. in Finland, New Zealand, Austria, Germany, United Kingdom, Bulgaria and Croatia).



6***

Conclusion

This is indeed a unique opportunity that is given to us, to work collectively towards a paradigm shift on how we respond to large scale movements, and most importantly, how do we secure safe and dignified responses to refugees.

We support the UNHCR's proposal to create a global refugee response group, inclusive of a broad range of stakeholders, which could foster greater coordination, communication, bridging different expertise, addressing together cross-cutting issues in a multisector approach; we also hope that additional Solidarity Summits, both internationally, regionally and locally, may foster additional unearmarked funding to support the ambitions of the Global Compact on Refugee's Plan of Action.

Using our Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies' privileged contacts with their respective governments, as auxiliary to the stand when it comes to partnering with them to deliver on their humanitarian work, the Movement stands ready to contribute to this critical process.

We bring our national perspectives, and we bring the successful and relevant programmes we have set up. We have run these programmes in support of or in partnership with governments.

It's a moral and practical imperative, and we are at your side in making it a reality.
