

Thematic discussion four – Measures to be taken in pursuit of solutions

Panel one: How can we support voluntary and sustainable return?

Themes:

- Establishing conditions to enable return in safety and dignity
 - Supporting the reintegration of refugees
 - Participation of refugees in peace and political processes
 - Ensuring enjoyment of housing, land and property rights
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- The experience from several return situations during the last decade has much to tell us.
- The first key message is that the return process must be seen as an integral part of peace building and the re-establishment of a functioning society through local and national governance and a development planning framework. Until recently, this did not happen in Afghanistan - and the consequences are clear. Somalia, on the other hand, is moving in the right direction, with a clear recognition that displacement must be dealt with as an overriding challenge for national development. We applaud these new developments.
- Secondly, the task of leading the return and reintegration process must sit with the national government. It is the government that establishes policies and planning frameworks, based on agreed national priorities - and it is within this that returnees must be fully integrated, at par with other citizens. Multilateral and bilateral assistance actors must support - but not lead.
- A third key message is that refugee and IDP return must be dealt with as part and parcel of the same process. IDPs face exactly the same challenges as refugees and are often in equally significant numbers. Every effort should be made **not** to distinguish and discriminate between these two groups - and instead ensure that they are entitled to the same rights and support as any other population group in similar circumstances. It is about access to basic social services, decent livelihoods, political influence, legal protection etc. It is vulnerability, not status that must guide assistance.
- Fourth, particular attention must be paid to the question of land, property and housing. This is about putting in place the necessary legal processes for restoration

- and to recognise that many return from protracted displacement without having access to land and property - and without the necessary resources to buy it. The failure to deal with this is a key factor in causing secondary displacement and unplanned, often chaotic urbanisation - and in the end, further vulnerabilities and social unrest.
- UNHCR's role in all this is central - but not in terms of leading the assistance response. Instead, UNHCR has two primary responsibilities: Monitoring that agreed protection standards are respected during return processes - and facilitating the work of the government and assistance actors in supporting reintegration as part and parcel of broader development programmes. This is about providing data on demographics, expected return patterns, vulnerability etc. We welcome the recently announced plan to work with the World Bank in setting up a data centre. This could be a much needed major step forward in terms of delivering the data that we all need for an improved response.
- Bilateral and multilateral actors must factor return and reintegration into their planning from day one – and be ready to provide additional financial support to ensure the ability to meet the challenges without affecting other development efforts.

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Panel four: How can we make local solutions work for refugees and the communities in which they live?

Themes:

- Support interested States to provide local opportunities as part of a comprehensive approach to protection and solutions;
 - Support inclusive policies;
 - Support naturalization procedures; and
 - Promote social harmony and address xenophobia.
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- The concept note lists a whole range of actions and approaches in which assistance actors should assist host states. All of these actions in many ways reflect best practices in terms of applying a development lens to displacement challenges – and they are totally in line with the principles developed by the Solutions Alliance and subsequent efforts by, for instance, the World Bank. We welcome and support this fully.
- However, as demonstrated by the experience of the Solutions Alliance, we are confronted by major challenges when trying to roll out these approaches. Let me mention three:
- Firstly, it is clear that the host government must be in driving seat when developing inclusive and comprehensive approaches that meet the needs of both displaced people and host communities. And in this, responsibilities need to sit with relevant ministries and departments. If it stays with a refugee department or a similar authority as is very often the case, it will undermine the necessary integration across local and central government.
- Secondly, bilateral and multilateral actors must recognise and reward inclusive and comprehensive approaches to displacement – by factoring displacement into their planning from day one – and by being ready to provide additional financial support to ensure the ability to meet the challenges without affecting other development efforts. In short, we must find ways of establishing the necessary systems for a predictable, sufficient, and long-term response that continues until durable solutions have been found for all affected. Impressive progress has been made in the past year with the World Bank IDA 18 sub-window for refugees and local host communities and the Global Concessional Financing Facility – but we need to see

similar action from other multilateral actors and in bilateral development cooperation. Denmark is now including the response to displacement in its development cooperation with countries such as Uganda, Ethiopia and Afghanistan – and we call on others to do the same.

- These approaches need to be institutionalized as a regular part of development cooperation with displacement affected countries. We must find ways of establishing the necessary systems for a predictable, sufficient, and long-term response that continues until durable solutions have been found for all affected – and that ensures that the inclusion of refugees actually result in **additional** development financing.
- Thirdly, UNHCR must adapt to the New Way of Working. It should no longer focus on Care and Maintenance. Instead, it has two primary responsibilities: It has to monitor that agreed protection standards are respected - and it should facilitate the work of the government and assistance actors in supporting reintegration as part and parcel of broader development programmes. This is about providing data on demographics, expected return patterns, vulnerability etc. We welcome the recently announced plan to work with the World Bank in setting up a data centre. This could be a much needed major step forward in terms of delivering the data that we all need for an improved response.

Thematic discussion five – Measures to be taken in pursuit of solutions

Panel one: How can we address the root causes of large movements of refugees?

Themes:

- Early warning and preventive diplomacy;
 - Climate change and displacement;
 - Peacebuilding and development; and
 - Explosive weapons and displacement.
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- The key to solving displacement is obviously to prevent it from occurring in the first place. We very much on the need to building on the UN Secretary General's reform agenda – and hence for UNHCR and partners to collaborate across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding agendas in every possible way to help prevent future conflicts and displacement.
- UNHCR possesses both expertise and presence in fragile regions and is therefore a strong potential resource in coherent and comprehensive international efforts to deal with human rights violations and other factors leading to conflict.
- The international community also needs to recognise causes of displacement that falls outside the criteria of the refugee convention – and re-enforce its efforts to deal with such causes. This includes all forms of disasters that may force people to leave their homes and cross international borders in search of the safety and assistance that their own government may not be able to provide. There is a direct link from this to improved disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction – and also to climate change mitigation, efforts to combat environmental degradation and resilience programming. Such efforts need to be mainstreamed to a much greater extent across development efforts in countries at risk.
- UNHCR is exceptionally well placed to support efforts of this nature, again given its insights, expertise and wide presence in relevant countries and regions. But UNHCR cannot manage these challenges alone. Instead, it must offer its assistance to facilitate collective efforts by the international community as a whole, together with governments in affected countries.