Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme

Standing Committee
72nd meeting

Solutions: ending displacement and statelessness

Summary

This paper summarizes key developments in UNCHR's work towards attaining solutions to forced displacement since the paper "New approaches to solutions" (EC/67/SC/CRP.14) was presented to the Standing Committee in June 2016. There have been some advances in voluntary repatriation and return to places of origin, local integration and resettlement, as well as complementary pathways to protection and solutions. Partnerships with development actors are broadening, allowing UNHCR to assume a facilitating role with specialized actors to ensure protection and assistance for people of concern through a variety of channels. International cooperation, especially bilateral development aid, has important potential for advancing resilience and solutions.

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I. Introduction

1.   In 2017, a limited number of refugees, internally displaced and stateless people found a solution, compared to the global magnitude of forced displacement and statelessness. The political will and capacity of States are indispensable in addressing the root causes of displacement and achieving durable solutions. Nevertheless, UNHCR and other actors can support such efforts by promoting good governance and the rule of law at the national and international levels, assisting with the protection of human rights, and by leveraging humanitarian, development and peacebuilding capacities to ensure solidarity and effective responsibility-sharing.

2.   This paper provides an update on developments in UNHCR's approach to solutions and in global efforts to achieve solutions. It summarizes progress made since the papers on "New approaches to solutions" (EC/67/SC/CRP.14) and "Resilience and self-reliance from a protection and solutions perspective" (EC/68/SC/CRP.4) and complements the "Update on the comprehensive refugee response framework" (EC/69/SC/CRP.13), the "Update on UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons" (EC/69/SC/CRP.9) and the "Note on international protection" (EC/69/SC/CRP.8).

II. Institutionalizing a comprehensive approach to solutions

3.   The new approach to solutions, presented in June 2016, proposed a stronger focus on comprehensive and progressive responses that simultaneously address four interrelated dimensions of a solution: legal, socio-cultural, civil-political and economic, on the basis that these are all relevant to the success of the eventual solution, in any country. This approach recognizes the possibility that without taking into consideration the interactions among these dimensions, solutions will not be durable. For example, a strong focus on the legal dimension (e.g. naturalization or alternative legal stay arrangements for refugees), without adequate support to States and communities to create economic opportunities for all, may generate an unwelcoming environment. Conversely, if displaced people are not included in public planning, or lack access to administrative services and justice, it is difficult for them to make economic progress and secure a durable legal status.

4.   This approach also acknowledges the need for a stronger focus on prevention and on the entire spectrum of forced displacement[1] and statelessness, recognizing that many States can be the home country of internally displaced, returnees and stateless persons, while at the same time a host country for refugees and other foreigners, as well as a country of origin for citizens in exile. Pursuing this approach requires a strong engagement from humanitarian, development and peacebuilding partners to support States and communities to strengthen national systems so that they can include and protect the multi-dimensional rights of persons of concern.

5.   To improve its institutional infrastructure to advance such an approach to solutions, UNHCR has established a process for multi-year, multi-partner (MYMP) planning and created a new Division of Resilience and Solutions (DRS).

6.   UNHCR's MYMP framework allows longer-term planning and strategic objectives agreed with partners through an inclusive process, with people of concern to the Office and their hosts at the centre of both planning and priority-setting. The MYMP covers all aspects of UNHCR's work and supports the operationalization of the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF). MYMP protection and solutions strategies allow country operations to maintain a longer-term focus on achieving solutions, while ensuring that immediate needs are addressed, the rights of all people of concern protected and host communities supported.

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[1] *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*. Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/5894558d4.pdf.

7.   Building on pilots in six operations, in 2017 an additional 16 operations in four regions developed MYMP strategies for the next three to five years.[2] Preliminary findings from a lessons-learned process suggest that the development of a MYMP-strategy has fostered strategic reflection on longer-term impact and has helped operations to coordinate with a wider range of partners. These lessons, together with real-time learning from the application of the CRRF, will inform the MYMP approach, institutionalizing it by 2022.

8.   To guide the Office's engagement in pursuing solutions, DRS was established in February 2018. One of the Division's two services will sustain the work of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Task Team in operationalizing the CRRF in the roll-out countries and applying the approach throughout operations. This service will also provide guidance and technical support to field operations in areas such as voluntary return and reintegration, education, economic inclusion and self-reliance, local integration opportunities, housing-land-and-property, the inclusion of people of concern in public planning, administration and justice. The second service will focus on partnerships and strategies with development partners, and on mobilizing support for the inclusion of forcibly displaced people in national development plans, national and local services and host communities. The service will furthermore gather and analyse socio-economic data to inform UNHCR's engagement with development actors.

III.   Highlights of advances in solutions

9.   In 2017, UNHCR made some progress in engaging States and development, humanitarian and peacebuilding partners to contribute to burden- and responsibility-sharing, support national systems and actively search for solutions, due to the momentum created by the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants.

Voluntary repatriation and return to the place of origin

10.   Recognizing that voluntary repatriation is the preferred solution for many refugees, in 2017 UNHCR remained focused on supporting processes that allowed refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to make a free and well-informed decision about return. Thanks to its protection monitoring activities, UNHCR was able to inform refugees and IDPs on conditions in areas of return, protection risks and obstacles. Protection monitoring has become increasingly important because of a rise in the challenging situations to which individuals return despite conditions not being conducive to sustainable reintegration.

11.   In 2017, some 667,400 refugees returned to their countries of origin. UNHCR supported the voluntary repatriation of refugees to countries including Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan. A significant number of returns were self-organized and these took place to the Central African Republic, Colombia and Nigeria. Spontaneous returns to situations that may be unsafe and where reintegration may not be sustainable reflect the complex dynamics in which many refugees and IDPs decide whether to return. While 2017 saw a slight net decline in the global number of IDPs by about 300,000 people—returns thus offsetting new displacement—many of these returns took place in hazardous security conditions and may not be sustainable.

12.   To make returns more sustainable, UNHCR collaborated with development and peacebuilding partners. In the Central African Republic, IDPs and Central African refugees in neighbouring countries were included in the national perception survey on justice, security and peace that will inform state-building efforts which can create conditions conducive for return. With other partners, UNHCR is also enhancing returnees' access to their housing, land and property, thus fostering returns. In Sudan, a joint UN programme is supporting justice- and security-sector strengthening, including dispute-resolution mechanisms, and the re-establishment of the criminal justice system in pilot areas where IDPs are likely to return.

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[2] These comprised Algeria, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Niger, Rwanda and Ukraine, as well as the Regional Office for Northern Europe.

In Burundi, a joint programme by UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) supports local capacities for cross-border monitoring and access to justice, security and social services for returnees and local communities along with livelihoods opportunities. While it is too soon to measure impact, these efforts aim to address the main reason forcibly displaced people usually give for being unable to return, namely: insecurity, lack of governance and rule of law, and inability to reclaim housing, land and property.

Local solutions

13.   In 2017, UNHCR continued to advocate naturalization and permanent residence with States, supported refugees in addressing administrative and practical barriers to these, and worked with authorities on integration policies and legislation. During this time, Costa Rica, India, Mexico, Kazakhstan and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia granted citizenship to groups of refugees; Ecuador started issuing ID cards to refugees allowing them to exercise the same rights and services as nationals; and Ethiopia and Kenya have pledged to locally integrate certain groups of refugees.

14.   Similarly, UNHCR advocated for the right of IDPs to make well-informed and voluntary choices to integrate locally. It supported authorities and communities of IDPs, in Niger for example, with civil registration processes and the legalization of informal settlements—thus facilitating the provision of essential services, access to subsidies for home improvements, and credit for livelihood activities.

Resettlement

15.   Despite increasing resettlement needs identified by UNHCR, there was a 54 percent drop in available resettlement quotas to 75,188 places in 2017, compared to 163,200 places offered in 2016. This declining trend is expected to continue in 2018, constraining UNHCR's ability to respond to resettlement priorities—including from countries along the Central Mediterranean Route—or to maintain resettlement of Syrian refugees and from CRRF roll-out countries.

Complementary pathways to protection and solutions

16.   In 2017, UNHCR worked with States and other partners to support the sustainable and systematic establishment and expansion of complementary pathways to protection and solutions, including in Argentina, Brazil,[3] Chile, Colombia, France,[4] Japan[5] and Peru. Despite progress, refugees continued to face barriers to accessing such complementary pathways. UNHCR supported States and other stakeholders in overcoming these obstacles, and in developing complementary pathways that are predictable, sustainable and protection-sensitive.

IV.   Inclusion in and access to national systems

17.   A number of States have enacted or are in the process of enacting more progressive refugee laws, as well as laws to ensure that IDPs have access to services. In addition to solid legislation and policy, however, it is paramount that national and local institutions have the capacity to implement such laws, to plan and budget for inclusion of forcibly displaced people, and to engage in participatory processes with communities and other key

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[3] Argentina and Brazil continue to implement their Humanitarian Visa Programmes for Syrians, leading to the arrival of more than 600 Syrians in Argentina, and the establishment of necessary legal and institutional capacities in Brazil.

[4] Twenty-five Syrian refugees arrived in France to study at the Universities of Toulouse and Montpellier under a scholarship scheme offered by the *Région Occitane-Pyrénées-Méditerranée*.

[5] Nineteen Syrians students and their families arrived in Japan to complete a master's degree through the Government of Japan's Initiative for the future of Syrian Refugees.

stakeholders. This is particularly true of local government entities, because they are at the forefront of public service delivery and ensuring social cohesion. However they may not have the technical and financial means to do so. Therefore, UNHCR has reinforced its support to local authorities and stepped up engagement with development partners, to strengthen the capacity of the services that are to include people of concern to UNHCR., In Ethiopia Lebanon and Pakistan, UNHCR and UNDP support local authorities and the justice system with integrated planning and budgeting and the inclusion of refugees in community-safety and dispute-resolution councils. In Burundi and Somalia, UNHCR works with a variety of UN entities on similar programmes for IDPs and returnees.

18.   Possible inclusion in social systems has emerged as a policy area of interest to UNHCR in its efforts to address forced displacement. A global mapping by UNHCR of social-safety-net programmes in 2017 is now informing its cash-based interventions with a view to linking them more effectively with national systems. So far, refugees have been enrolled in social-safety-net programmes in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), while many UNHCR operations[6] support the enrolment of refugees into national health insurance schemes. Where refugees were not included in national social protection systems, UNHCR adapted its humanitarian response to harmonize with the national system while working towards inclusion. In certain contexts, UNHCR engaged with informal social-protection mechanisms through local groups.

19.   To further economic and financial inclusion, UNHCR engaged with States, development actors, and specialized private-sector institutions to facilitate access by people of concern to financial services and labour markets thus increasing their livelihood opportunities. In Zambia, the National Bank now grants access to bank accounts and mobile wallets to refugees with an alien or refugee identification. UNHCR is also working with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Financial Sector Deepening Africa and UN Capital Development Fund to advance financial inclusion of refugees in Jordan, Rwanda, Uganda and other countries. Recognizing the importance of the private sector, UNHCR and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) developed a 10-point action plan[7] to help businesses employ refugees. UNHCR continued to promote the graduation approach and inclusion of refugees in similar programmes by government and development actors[8] and has launched the MADE51 (Market Access, Design and Empowerment for Refugee artisans) initiative, linking refugee artisans with markets.[9] Building on the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Guiding Principles and Recommendation 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience, UNHCR and ILO have been working with a variety of Member States to expand access to decent work in ways that support persons of concern and host communities.

20.   With regard to education, UNHCR and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen the support for the inclusion of refugees in national multi-year education plans. UNHCR is increasingly participating in national education planning committees. In 2017, the Government of Chad accelerated funds from its GPE grant to respond to the education needs of refugees in the Lake Chad Basin region. In South Sudan, the General Education Strategic Plan provides free education for all children including refugees, as well as access to public university for those who meet the entry requirements. UNHCR engages with Education Cannot Wait (ECW) fund, in which it advocates ECW first-response and multi-year programme support for refugee education, and contributes refugee education expertise.

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[6] In Benin, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ghana, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and Togo.

[7] "Engaging with employers in the hiring of refugees" http://www.unhcr.org/5adde9904.pdf

[8] Graduation approach countries: Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ecuador, Mozambique, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

[9] MADE51 countries: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Jordan Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

V. International cooperation as a key element for advancing solutions

21.   UNHCR's collaboration with development actors has taken on new dimensions in 2017 and 2018, generating innovative strategic partnership frameworks and opening several avenues for practical cooperation. Globally, UNHCR has continued to engage in the policy and strategic reflections on humanitarian-development cooperation within the United Nations Development Group, OECD, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and in coalitions such as the Global Alliance on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 and the United Nation's Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections. UNHCR has enhanced practical partnerships with key development actors including the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), ILO, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Korea International Cooperation Agency, UNDP, and the World Bank.

22.   In its evolving partnership with the World Bank Group, UNHCR focused on the countries where the World Bank has launched its new financing instruments, the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) for Middle-Income Countries (Jordan and Lebanon) and the IDA 18 sub-window for refugees and host communities. Joint World Bank-UNHCR missions have been conducted to 16 countries to assess the policy and operational prospects for the design and implementation of government-led programmes benefitting both refugees and local communities. A number of programmes will begin implementation during 2018. To contribute to global data collection and analysis of forced displacement situations, and in particular to improve the provision of critical socio-economic data necessary for informed policy and resource allocation, UNHCR and the World Bank are establishing a Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement.

23.   Based on a UNHCR-UNDP review of their cooperation, the two organizations are coordinating their efforts at country level, especially around the implementation of the SDGs and the commitment to leave no-one behind; the inclusion of forced-displacement and statelessness considerations in national and local plans; extending public planning, administration and justice to the forcibly displaced; targeted early-recovery and livelihoods programming; and early warning and preparedness.

24.   In September 2017, UNHCR and the OECD' Development Assistance Committee published "Addressing Forced Displacement through Development Planning and Co-operation", aimed at informing donor strategies to better support countries faced with forced displacement, from the onset of a crisis.

25.   Harnessing the capacity of bilateral development programmes and funding to address the needs of the forcibly displaced and their host communities, as well as to strengthen the national and local services that support them, is key to achieving solutions. Such sources of funding should be additional to existing development programmes, or extended to forced-displacement situations by taking advantage of economies of scale. Preliminary mapping of the recent use of development funds and programmes to support CRRF approaches shows that donors such as Denmark, DEVCO, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Norway (as well as the World Bank and some other development financial institutions) have increased funding to programming that benefits displaced populations and their hosts. Further analyses will address how this type of funding can be mobilized without affecting the resources available for development in parts of the country unaffected by forced displacement.

VI.   Conclusion

26.   The opportunities for solutions were limited in 2017 and are likely to remain so in 2018. UNHCR accordingly is focusing on addressing some of the obstacles to voluntary and sustainable return, and on supporting those States that are keen to advance on local solutions. It will also continue to advocate an increase in resettlement places and promote complementary pathways to protection and solutions. With regard to increasing self-reliance, recent advances in the inclusion of persons of concern in national systems in line with development plans and national priorities are promising. UNHCR is encouraged by the current global emphasis on solutions and by the potential of the global compact on refugees to open new possibilities to achieve durable solutions for persons of concern.