

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

Distr.: Restricted
24 June 2022
English
Original: English and French

Standing Committee
Eighty-fourth meeting

Solutions

Summary

This paper provides an update on UNHCR's efforts to achieve solutions for refugees since the conference room paper on solutions (EC/72/SC/CRP.12) was presented at the eighty-first meeting of the Standing Committee in July 2021.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Highlights of the progress and challenges in achieving solutions	1-22	3
A. Voluntary repatriation.....	5-10	3
B. Integration and other local solutions.....	11-14	4
C. Resettlement	15-17	4
D. Complementary pathways.....	18-22	5
II. Inclusion and access to national systems.....	23-29	5
III. Conclusion	30	6

I. Highlights of the progress and challenges in achieving solutions

1. Finding solutions to displacement is one of the High Commissioner's primary tasks. UNHCR works with States and other stakeholders to identify and pursue durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons¹: advocating conditions that are conducive to voluntary return; supporting inclusion and local integration; strengthening the resilience of affected communities; and facilitating resettlement and complementary pathways.
2. The three support platforms, launched at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, continued their work to strengthen regional responses to forced displacement in Central America and Mexico (*Marco Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones*, MIRPS), Afghanistan (Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees SSAR), and East Africa (in partnership with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development IGAD).
3. Following a regional conference organized by the Government of Cameroon and UNHCR, a declaration on solutions was signed in Yaoundé calling for concerted action to assist nearly 1.4 million displaced Central Africans. Signatories to the declaration agreed to establish a regional cooperation framework to strengthen the protection and search for solutions for those displaced by the crisis in Central Africa, with the support of the international community.
4. In 2021, UNHCR recommended the cessation of status for refugees from Côte d'Ivoire, with the aim of bringing this situation to closure in 2022.

A. Voluntary repatriation

5. By the end of 2021, some 429,300 refugees had returned to their home countries during the year, an increase of 71 per cent compared to 2020. However, the rate of returns remains low with conflict and insecurity persisting in many of the countries from which displaced persons originate. Several negative factors continue to affect the sustainability of returns, including limited services; damaged or destroyed infrastructure; challenges in recovering housing, land, and property; fragile or faltering peace processes and failure to address the root causes of displacement. Addressing root causes is primarily a State responsibility, but the Global Compact on Refugees recognizes that the international community has a significant role in helping remove barriers to return.
6. In West and Central Africa, UNHCR assisted the organized repatriation of over 33,000 refugees, including 22,000 to Côte d'Ivoire and 5,600 to the Central African Republic. Since 2011, 278,000 Ivorian refugees have returned, representing 92 per cent of those who had fled. Considering the fundamental and durable changes underpinning these returns, an [updated regional roadmap for comprehensive solutions](#) for Ivorian refugees was adopted to bring closure to this chapter of displacement. The roadmap promotes voluntary repatriation and reintegration alongside socioeconomic integration and permanent residency, including through naturalization, for Ivoirians who remain in host countries.
7. Under a tripartite agreement with Cameroon and Nigeria, nearly 4,000 refugees returned to Nigeria. UNHCR initiated projects in return areas to promote housing, land and property rights and to facilitate livelihood opportunities, and the Office engaged development actors.
8. In the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, nearly 340,000 refugees returned, including more than 64,000 facilitated returns to Burundi and some 270,000 spontaneous returns to South Sudan. In response to this trend of self-organized returns, which have reached a cumulative total of 500,000 to South Sudan since 2017, UNHCR has adopted a solutions-oriented, area-based approach called "pockets of hope", which targets high return areas through investments in medium- to long-term development and peace interventions.

¹ Paper EC/72/SC/CRP.14 is dedicated to UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons.

UNHCR facilitated the return of over 1,700 refugees to Rwanda. More than 300 Somalis were assisted to return, while another 2,300 who returned on their own were provided with support on arrival, including through a job creation strategy developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with the participation of the National Chamber of Commerce, Federal member States and Federal Government departments and ministries.

9. In the Middle East, around 35,000 refugees returned to the Syrian Arab Republic, a similar number to 2020. While UNHCR considers the situation not yet conducive for the promotion of large-scale organized returns, it is working with the Government and partners to remove the obstacles to voluntary return.

10. UNHCR supports voluntary repatriation also through the provision of repatriation assistance. During this reporting period, \$13 million was allocated to support initial reintegration needs globally upon return.

B. Integration and other local solutions

11. Prospects for integration and other local solutions are closely linked to gradual progress in achieving a level of self-reliance that allows refugees to contribute to the communities and States that host them. Through pledges in support of the Global Compact on Refugees, countries and organizations committed to advancing forms of legal and socioeconomic inclusion that provide a basis for integration and other local solutions. Despite challenges related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the global economic turndown, some progress was made.

12. In multiple locations, UNHCR supported the capacity of government agencies to take steps in support of refugee self-reliance. This frequently involved assistance to issue national identity cards facilitating access to public services and pursuing out-of-camp strategies that favour social cohesion. In Brazil, the innovative approach to the voluntary relocation of Venezuelans continued and by December 2021, more than 70,000 had been assisted to relocate to more than 730 urban locations, with better integration opportunities.

13. In Liberia, the Government is implementing a local integration strategy for Ivorian refugees by making the necessary changes to the legal framework, creating conditions for equal access to services, socioeconomic and cultural integration and by facilitating access to documents such as national identity cards, work and residence permits. UNHCR advocacy and assistance, both to governments and refugees, resulted in the issuance of residence permits in Albania and North Macedonia. UNHCR is assisting the Government of Guinea-Bissau with steps to achieve naturalization for some 7,000 refugees.

14. UNHCR and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies published [Local Solutions for Refugees: Key Considerations](#) as a contribution to discussions on local options. UNHCR also supported the development of comprehensive government-led strategies, such as the [Solutions Initiative for South Sudan and Sudan](#), that take into account integration and other local solutions. In Albania, UNHCR contributed to a comprehensive strategy and multi-year action plan for refugee inclusion and integration. Finally, in Kenya, a six-pillar roadmap has framed discussions on the scope for local opportunities in the broader context of seeking solutions for refugees.

C. Resettlement

15. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the availability of third-country solutions, but this started to ease somewhat in 2021. UNHCR submitted more than 63,000 refugees to 23 countries for resettlement consideration. This was a 60 per cent increase from 2020, when the negative impact of COVID-19 was at its height. Women and girls represented 50 per cent of the submissions and 52 per cent overall were children. Nineteen 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 (25,774), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (13,121), Eritrea (2,690), Sudan (2,599) and Somalia (2,386).

16. More than 39,000 refugees departed to 20 different countries, an increase of 72 per cent compared to 2020. The largest number of UNHCR-facilitated resettlement departures were from Türkiye (7,382), Lebanon (6,246), Jordan (4,374), Egypt (3,729), and Rwanda (2,506). Although departures from Libya were on hold for several months, 748 people were evacuated to Emergency Transit Mechanisms in Niger and Rwanda, and to Italy in 2021.

17. Under the joint UNHCR and International Office of Migration (IOM) [Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative](#) (CRISP), capacity-building initiatives continued to be implemented globally. A joint report by UNHCR and the Migration Policy Institute, [Refugee Resettlement and Complementary Pathways: Opportunities for Growth](#) was published and [UNHCR's Integration Handbook](#), a key reference text for the integration of resettled refugees, was launched online. CRISP provided strategic support to the “Growing solutions and funding for refugees” (GROW) initiative which aims to foster a welcoming environment through mobilizing community-based support for the reception and integration of refugees, combining volunteer mentoring by individual donors with local crowdfunding.

D. Complementary pathways for admission of refugees to third countries

18. While the scale of complementary pathways remained limited, heightened interest and support for education pathways and labour mobility are apparent with new or expanded programmes emerging in Australia, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The use of humanitarian admission and humanitarian visas in Belgium, Germany and Italy offered safe pathways in addition to resettlement.

19. The 2020 report by UNHCR and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) examining a decade (2010-2019) of admissions on family, study and work permits suggests that a considerable number of refugees benefited from these pathways. UNHCR and OECD are committed to continued cooperation to improve the accuracy of data informing better understanding of the opportunities available to refugees.

20. The global family reunification network remained a key platform for promoting access to family reunification, including in response to the Afghanistan crisis. Existing costs and documentation requirements, among other barriers, continue to hamper reunification. However, progress was seen with the use of remote processing, alternatives to documentary evidence and other practices, allowing greater numbers to benefit from family reunification at a quicker pace.

21. The global task force on third country education pathways issued guidance on minimum standards and contributed to the development of a proposal for education pathways to the United States. New education pathways programmes were launched in France and Mexico.

22. The global refugee sponsorship initiative supported States and civil society to pilot and expand community sponsorship in Australia, Belgium, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

II. Inclusion and access to national systems

23. UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) piloted a joint appraisal tool on the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in national frameworks for achieving the sustainable development goals in three countries (Colombia, North Macedonia and Türkiye). UNHCR is also working with multilateral and regional development banks, bilateral development actors, and other stakeholders to better leverage development investments for protection outcomes and solutions.

24. The International Development Association of the World Bank's Window for Host Community and Refugees has continued to support the socioeconomic development of refugees alongside the communities that host them, including by promoting the inclusion of refugees in national systems in ways that open economic opportunities.

25. UNHCR worked with the World Bank to support governments in designing and implementing social protection projects in Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Mauritania. UNHCR worked with the Ministry of Social Affairs in Mauritania to enrol 14,000 refugee households in the national social registry while ensuring that 7,000 households receive regular social assistance cash transfers. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, UNHCR's support to the national social protection system led to refugees benefiting from government assistance.

26. In Uganda, a joint Swedish International Development Agency-UNHCR and Grameen Credit Agricole Foundation programme has reached over 25,000 borrowers from both refugee and local populations. An independent evaluation found that over 80 per cent of participants surveyed had begun to save money, and 78 per cent reported that their businesses had grown. Access to agricultural land in Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Liberia, Namibia, Rwanda, South Sudan and Zimbabwe has bolstered economic prospects for refugees.

27. UNHCR monitoring of the inclusion of refugees in health systems has revealed some promising developments. Of 51 countries surveyed in 2021, preliminary results showed that 41 had a national health plan or policy and 78 per cent of those included refugees, up from 68 per cent in 2019. A total of 46 countries provided refugees with access to national primary health care facilities and 45 reported access at secondary level. Access to primary health care on the same terms as nationals was reported in 43 countries (93 per cent) and to secondary health care in 38 countries (83 per cent), a slight increase from 2019 (92 per cent and 77 per cent, respectively).

28. To date, 162 countries have included refugees in their national COVID-19 vaccination plans. Challenges to full coverage included declining expenditure on health care that brought many refugee hosting countries below the annual threshold of \$86 per capita recommended by the World Health Organization for minimum cost-effective health interventions in low-income countries.

29. According to a UNHCR report on education for refugees in 2021, the number of refugees accessing higher education rose from 3 to 5 per cent in 2019-2020. Most of these refugee students were enrolled in national universities, colleges and vocational training centres, underscoring the importance of equal access with a view to transition into the labour market. Supporting the capacity of schools in return areas and documenting the educational background of returnees remain critical to the sustainability of voluntary repatriation.

III. Conclusion

30. Despite limited progress in achieving durable solutions at scale, new opportunities have emerged that offer some promise for the future by facilitating educational and labour mobility, strengthening the human capital of affected communities, and development investment geared towards inclusion in national systems, based on international cooperation on burden- and responsibility-sharing.
