

InterAction Refugee Policy Working Group Key Messages
UNHCR Thematic Discussion 3
“Support for Immediate and Ongoing Needs and Support for Host Countries and Communities”

With displacement lasting for more than a decade on average, the New York Declaration’s commitment to adequately support refugees and their host communities—amongst which 76% of refugees live—is more important than ever. Additionally, the small number of states which host the largest numbers of refugees are predominantly low- to middle-income countries that often do not have adequate financial means, infrastructure, or institutions to support a high number of displaced people. Compounding these issues are the unique vulnerabilities of those who are displaced, especially those who require additional protection.

An effective global response to refugees is: comprehensive and involves host governments, communities and other stakeholders; driven by the articulated needs of host countries; utilizes creative ideas from sectors outside of the humanitarian field, particularly long-term development; operates based on humanitarian principles; and, most importantly, addresses the “immediate and ongoing needs” of refugees wherever they are and irrespective of their legal status.

This Thematic Discussion ties in heavily with Thematic Discussion 2 concerning “Measures to be Taken at the Onset of a Large Movement of Refugees” and must emphasize the longer-term development implications of such movements. The ability to meet ongoing needs and plan for the long-term situation of the displaced and their host communities is predicated by the ability to meet the immediate and urgent needs of refugees at the onset of a large refugee flow, and will require that the responding humanitarian and state actors are given sufficient funding, support, and attention for the duration of displacement.

Similarly, this Thematic Discussion also relies heavily on what is discussed in Thematic Discussion 1, which requires member states to place additional emphasis on providing sufficient and timely financing for both short and long-term needs, as well as increasing resettlement quotas and providing an “expanded” set of durable solutions.

Mobilizing Resources for Humanitarian and Development Assistance to Host States

- Recognizing that current funding levels for almost all refugee-related responses are significantly lower than necessary for adequate assistance, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) must concentrate on covering critical needs, focusing on acute protection needs and the most vulnerable people. The CRRF should prioritize lending to low- and middle-income countries, while also considering the proportional needs of the refugee caseload within the host country. The framework must utilize creative ways of engaging community members that are not easily accessible and/or visible.
- Financing that matches the range of immediate humanitarian needs of refugees and host communities to longer-term development needs of host countries must be provided by member states and international financial institutions. UNHCR should work with donors and international financial institutions, including the World Bank, to create financing plans that will make medium to long-term development planning that focuses on the needs of refugees and host communities possible and the norm.
- To ensure financing is complementary across stakeholders and aligned to needs, the state, United Nations (UN) agencies, humanitarian and development actors, community leaders, and refugees themselves should conduct joint analysis and planning. Planning must align with a rights-based approach, principles of humanitarian planning, and focus on ensuring critical health, education, and self-reliance outcomes.

Supporting the Inclusion of Refugees in National Systems and Services

- The CRRF should incentivize States to include refugees in national development and sector plans to ensure both refugees and host communities have access to national systems and services, including those supported and funded by international financial institutions.
- As part of long-term development planning for large refugee flows, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators should be applied to refugee populations in host countries, recognizing the responsibility of host countries for these populations. Plans should be driven and measured according to the impact and outcomes they produce rather than inputs or activities.
- Refugees and other forcibly displaced populations, regardless of national origin, should have access to the same basic services as host country citizens. However, services must also be tailored to the specific needs of those fleeing, such as life-saving care and attention to psychosocial needs. To prevent competition between host and refugee groups, special services should be provided based on vulnerability and need rather than on legal status.
- Services provided to refugees should take their specific needs into account: needs assessments should be conducted in an environment that is conducive to refugees safely disclosing information relevant to their particular needs and vulnerabilities; service providers should know the legal rights of the displaced and should focus on providing sufficient information regarding available services tailored to each particular refugee population in their own language.
- In addition to engaging local authorities and national representatives in planning and implementing initiatives to protect the environment and strengthen infrastructure, refugee community input is necessary for successful and sustainable infrastructure and environmental projects in areas where there is a significant refugee presence. Communities, including vulnerable and minority groups, should be consulted about their priority needs, the barriers they face, and how to most effectively address them.
- As host community engagement is a critical aspect of successful refugee integration, long-term planning should promote social inclusion and cohesion among refugees and host communities.

Enhancing Economic Inclusion and Promoting Livelihood Opportunities for Refugees to Benefit Host Countries and Communities

- The right to work is paramount for refugees to survive and thrive in host communities. Host country policies should create, incentivize and mobilize local labor markets to allow refugees to work at the outset. Businesses should view refugees for their ability to fill gaps in the labor market in addition to creating new markets for goods and services
- Private sector actors in refugee responses can add unique and positive contributions to refugee assistance. However, with inherently different motivations than humanitarian organizations, private sector actors need to be held accountable to humanitarian principles including humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. The CRRF should determine how these principles will be monitored.
- Access to financial services is a critical element of providing self-reliance in the short, medium, and long-term. Affordable access to a range of financial services, such as electronic transfers and payments that enable people to store and move money safely, helps refugees cope with negative economic shocks, adapt to changing circumstances, reduce exposure to risk, build social capital, and stimulate economic activity.

Bringing Innovation to Humanitarian Assistance to Achieve Greater Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Accountability

- Cash-based assistance can achieve higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness as well as create more transparent and accountable mechanisms of delivery than other means of material assistance. Cash-based

assistance should be a central part of providing humanitarian assistance to refugee populations where feasible and market monitoring and other mechanisms to do no harm are in place. However, cash assistance must be protection-sensitive and service providers should also recognize the non-financial needs of refugees.

- Timely, accurate and transparent data are fundamental for determining needs and progress towards agreed-upon outcomes, as well as for holding all actors to account. The CRRF should offer guidance on roles and responsibilities for data collection as well as a methodology and standard for collecting and sharing data across various stakeholders.
- Filling gaps in the evidence base requires incentivizing and funding innovation. New tools and approaches, including a fast and flexible funding to quickly test and scale novel approaches, should be identified.