

Canadian Non-Paper: Views on the development of the Global Compact on Refugees

Canada, by virtue of its geography, has not faced the same pressures of front-line refugee-hosting countries. However, through the Canadian experience, we have become convinced that the policies and everyday actions of inclusion can lead to real economic, social and cultural benefits for all. We believe the Global Compact on Refugees is an opportunity for all states to come together, to stand with refugees and with host countries and commit to a Programme of Action based on inclusion, solidarity and truly global engagement. In that spirit, we offer the following reflections on responsibility-sharing, followed by recommendations for the Compact's Programme of Action.

A shared responsibility and opportunity: With the record-setting numbers of people worldwide forced from their homes, displacement is one of the most pressing global issues of our time. While some states on the front lines of these movements are profoundly impacted, this is an issue, much like climate change, that affects all states and requires collective action. The Global Compact on Refugees is an opportunity for the international community to work better together to improve the inadequacies of the system for responding to large movements of refugees. These improvements should be based on the understanding of our shared responsibility towards refugees, that front-line states shoulder a disproportionate share of this responsibility, and that there are many ways that all states, and a range of other actors, can reliably contribute. As with other global challenges, by greatly expanding the diversity and range of stakeholders, spurring innovation and empowering affected communities, we can collectively identify and advance approaches to increase international solidarity and better address displacement. Doing so will not only reaffirm our common humanity and the obligations we all share in protecting universal human rights, but it will also unlock significant human potential and build greater stability and social cohesion globally.

The benefits of inclusion: While refugees face enormous risks, having fled desperate situations and often finding refuge in very challenging conditions, we also need to recognize their capacities and better enable their self-reliance through policies of inclusion. While the immense strains that can be placed on host countries must be recognized, including refugees in host country communities and systems can benefit both refugees *and* host communities. For example, by including refugees in host country schools and curricula, rather than setting up parallel structures, investments in refugee education can be channeled into national systems. Including refugees in national education systems increases their chances to sustainably access safe, quality education, dramatically increasing their potential to contribute positively to host societies, as well as to the rebuilding of home countries upon return. Allowing refugees to be economically productive can, particularly when aligned with external investments, help to grow economies, as well as being beneficial for refugees themselves. However, for host countries to truly see the advantages of including refugees more actively within their communities and systems, significant investments benefitting both refugees and host communities are needed. Development engagement, international financing and private sector investment all need to be brought more actively and more predictably into these contexts.

Whole-of-society engagement to expand the level of international cooperation: Refugee protection is fundamentally a state responsibility. At the same time, there is significant untapped potential in other segments of our societies to contribute additional capacity for refugee assistance and protection. The success of Canada's private sponsorship of refugees' program shows how small groups of community members can make significant contributions to refugee protection. The role and innovations undertaken by many municipalities in fostering refugee protection and inclusion should also be better recognized and shared. Given the finite levels of international assistance and nascent international financing tools, we need to look to widen whole-of-society contributions across more countries to expand refugee assistance, protection and solutions.

Increasing solidarity as well as protection with more pathways: More states need to establish mechanisms to support pathways to third countries for refugees, including traditional resettlement as well as complementary mechanisms. Such pathways, even if they benefit a relatively small proportion of refugees worldwide, are important means to protect vulnerable individuals, show solidarity with front-line countries, and contribute to comprehensive responses. These pathways also increase awareness and connections between distant communities, many who are physically far removed from refugee situations. Distant communities become newly connected not only to the plight of those displaced, but also to their capacities to contribute to a global public good. The result can indeed be an increased understanding of very complex global issues, leading to stronger domestic support for governments' contributions internationally to address displacement.

Contextualized, gender-sensitive approaches are essential: In order to be truly comprehensive in improving responses to refugees, we need to more effectively recognize and address the specific needs and risks faced by women and children in displacement crises and work harder to involve and empower them. Doing so is both a human rights imperative but will also dramatically improve development outcomes for refugees, host communities and ultimately countries of origin. As a general approach, we need to do more to empower affected communities, including both refugees and host communities. Providing them with tools and opportunities to build self-reliance is key to preserving dignity, promoting human rights, and ensuring that stretched public sector finances and assistance go farther. At the same time, these approaches must be complemented by robust social protection policies and programming in support of the most vulnerable. Finally, we need to do better at building bottom-up responses – improving efforts to ensure affected communities, local government, and local actors shape comprehensive refugee responses. Doing so should help to ensure greater impact by building local ownership and contextualized solutions.

Based on these observations, Canada's recommendations for the Programme of Action:

The New York Declaration, and in particular the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, provides a firm outline of the commitments and fundamental requirements for responses to large movements of refugees. Along with the CRRF and a reaffirmation of states' international legal obligations towards refugees, the Global Compact should include a Programme of Action that outlines the tools, contributions and engagement necessary to implement these responses, including:

- An identified means to increase accountability within the international community for contributions towards responsibility and burden-sharing; such accountability could take the form of a monitoring and reporting mechanism;
- Specific initiatives to increase resettlement capacity and complementary pathways for refugees, including by providing technical support to states and other stakeholders who are establishing or expanding traditional and community resettlement programs, and encouraging innovative complementary pathways grounded in labour, education and family reunification outcomes.
- Mainstreaming gender-sensitivity throughout the Programme of Action and including within it actions that will be undertaken to address the specific risks faced by refugee women and children, support their empowerment and participation and promote gender equality among refugee populations;
- Measures to encourage and support the engagement of regional organizations, including regional development banks, in comprehensive refugee responses. In particular, regional organizations could have a strategic role in mobilizing international support, informing national responses to an influx and fostering durable solutions;
- Commitments to develop context-specific compacts in all large refugee situations, based around the application of the CRRF, that involve:
 - diverse stakeholders (humanitarian, development, civil society and government) committing to resources, policy changes and initiatives towards collective and measurable outcomes over a multi-year time horizon for refugees, host communities and countries of origin;
 - investments in data collection and analysis as well as evaluations to inform plans and programming; and,
 - a contextualized, gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation plan to assess progress towards the collective outcomes;
- A process established to foster learning and sharing of best comprehensive refugee response practices across contexts, including with respect to existing innovative international financing and concessional trade approaches for refugee-hosting countries with policies and approaches geared towards the socio-economic inclusion of refugees;
- In the spirit of a whole-of-society approach, measures to ensure local actors and cities are directly engaged in developing and implementing strategies for comprehensive refugee responses; direct city-to-city collaboration and learning, such as through the 100 Resilient Cities initiative, could be further supported to better integrate refugee hosting within urban planning;
- Recognition of the synergies and complementarity needed between policies and approaches for comprehensive refugee responses and those relating to internal displacement and of the importance of comprehensive responses to forced displacement;

Finally, recognizing the common commitments for refugees and migrants in the New York Declaration and the importance of both meeting the needs of people on the move and respecting their human rights, regardless of their status, Canada believes there needs to be a certain level of coherence and complementarity between the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration, particularly with respect to how the international community responds to mixed movements.