
“Towards a global compact on refugees”

Thematic discussion two: Measures to be taken at the onset of a large movement of refugees

17 October 2017

Panel two: How can we support States to receive large number of refugees in a safe and dignified manner?

Summary

Throughout the discussion seven key themes emerged:

1. The needs of refugees are at the centre of reception arrangements.
 - The right to seek asylum, the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, and *non-refoulement* are key elements, and encampment should be avoided wherever possible.
 - Refugees could be empowered to participate in processes that involve them from the outset.
 - Specific needs will need to be identified and taken into account, especially in relation to women and children, and victims of trafficking, with mechanisms in place to prevent abuse and exploitation, and to ensure that victims have practical assistance and access to justice.
2. Receiving States have a crucial role when it comes to safe and dignified reception for large numbers of refugees.
 - They provide for essential needs in reception and transit areas, including food, housing, water, health services, sanitation, bedding and clothing.
 - They also put in place measures to ensure the security of refugees and the communities that host them.
 - These measures meet the needs of refugees, but they also make an early start at building a sense of community, which is essential to the sustainability of the refugee response.
3. Actors other than national governments—particularly local actors—also make significant contributions to reception arrangements.
 - Local authorities and cities of all sizes are often the level of government that impact on the reception that refugees receive, particularly when it comes to running reception centres, ensuring access to health and education services, and even providing access to public transport so that refugees can take advantage of livelihood opportunities.
 - The role of civil society in both assisting the reception of refugees, but also supporting the resilience of host communities so that they are able to receive refugees in safety and dignity was stressed.
4. International, national and local responders need more support.
 - In responding to large movements of refugees, these actors face significant logistical and resource challenges. Support to local existing structures was stressed.

- We need to support all actors that are doing their part to receive refugees, particularly those who understand the local circumstances and the impact that large movements of refugees will have.
 - The desirability of international actors recruiting local staff to ensure that local points of view are taken into account was flagged.
 - What is required is a global response, with flexible, timely and robust support being recognized as an expression of international solidarity. The idea of solidarity conferences included in the concept paper was endorsed by a number of participants, calling for it to be one which is sustained.
 - A mechanism for such support should be developed at the global level. The proposed Global Refugee Response Group referenced in the concept paper was seen as a positive step towards the type of platform needed.
 - A number of concrete suggestions on different funding schemes was also flagged, ranging from direct contributions to a moratorium on debt repayments or innovative financial mechanisms, such as the issuance of bonds.
 - Other forms of support mentioned included non-conditional and flexible funding, expertise, technical assistance, capacity building (including for local authorities and local civil society actors).
5. Reception arrangements need to take into account the immediate impact that large numbers of refugees have on host communities.
- Such arrangements must provide assistance to and support the resilience of host communities, including meeting their development needs.
6. Increased pathways for refugees, including as a form of supporting States to receive large number of refugees, was also flagged.
- Increased resettlement opportunities, as well as complementary mobility schemes were encouraged.
7. Linked to the sixth point, durable solutions should be a focus of our efforts from day one.
- As soon as possible after arrival, the self-reliance of refugees can be supported through livelihood opportunities and education to avoid protracted reliance on short-term reception arrangements.

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