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## “Towards a global compact on refugees”

### Thematic discussion three: Meeting needs and supporting communities

18 October 2017

#### Panel two: how can we support the inclusion of refugees in national systems and services?

##### Summary

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The discussion addressed a wide range of national and local systems and services, including for health, education at all levels (including language learning), social protection (including systems for the protection of children and youth), labour market access, economic and social inclusion, political participation, the rule of law and governance, as well as rights to land, housing, property, legal identity and legal documentation.

It was observed that many hosting States have already included refugees in national and local systems and services. Behind this lies a recognition that improving systems and services for use by locals and refugees is efficient and effective and avoids the creation of expensive parallel systems. Inclusion also contributes to avoiding conflict between communities, and can contribute to the national development of the host country.

The clear link between the topic and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was also made a number of times, as was the importance of ensuring that inclusion policies are sensitive to age, gender and diversity considerations. Social protection, for example, should protect people *in* the country, rather than just people *of* the country. This is essential to “leaving no-one behind” in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The suggestions contained in the concept paper were broadly endorsed, and a number of further useful suggestions were also made.

Throughout the discussion, four key themes emerged, all of which are equally applicable to the full range of national systems and services that were discussed:

1. The early inclusion of refugees in national and local services, systems and development initiatives can lead to improved outcomes for refugees and host communities.
  - Including refugees as soon as possible after arrival—on the same conditions as host community members—supports refugees to achieve their potential as people and as drivers of economic development, serves as the basis for strong relationships between refugees and host communities, and also lays the groundwork for durable solutions, including voluntary and sustainable return when conditions allow.
  - Full inclusion also requires the assessment of refugees’ capacities, skills and qualifications. Translation and interpretation support will be required in the early stages to ensure meaningful inclusion.
2. To be effective, refugee integration will take place at two levels:
  - At the national level, enshrining the rights of refugees on a non-discriminatory basis in legislation and including refugees in national policies and plans ensures that inclusion is the agreed direction for the host State and the donor community.
  - The inclusion of refugees must also be embraced at the local level where the services are actually delivered. Refugee inclusion is impossible without a welcoming attitude

to refugees at the local level, though it is very difficult for inclusion to occur without clear direction and support from the national government and donors.

3. Such inclusion comes with great challenges.
  - National and local systems and services need to be strengthened and expanded in a wide range of areas, including health services, education, social welfare, legal assistance, and the rule of law and governance.
  - For many hosting countries, therefore, the inclusion of refugees places great strain on national and local systems and services. If these burdens are not addressed adequately, this could lead to resentment amongst host communities and a rise in levels of xenophobia.
4. In many States, the inclusion of refugees in national and local systems and services needs to be supported by the international community.
  - Reliable support to enable inclusion is required in financial terms, but also to support the coordination of inclusive policies, provide technical advice and build the capacity of relevant actors (within national and local governments, but also for civil society and beyond), as well as to ensure that policies of inclusion are supported by appropriate methodologies—including for needs assessment and planning—and timely and accurate data and information.
  - Such support, on a multi-sector and multi-partner basis, is a key element of burden- and responsibility-sharing, as it can also strengthen national capacities in a way that benefits host communities and that will endure for the long term.

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*UNHCR*  
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