

**DRC DIASPORA  
PROGRAMME, DEMARC &  
GIZ' Recommendations on  
behalf of diasporas to the  
Global Compact on Refugees'  
Programme of Action**

**Key considerations and recommendations to UNHCR  
and United Nations' Member States**

This paper sets forth joint recommendations of Danish Refugee Council Diaspora Programme, DEMAC (Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (Sector Project Forced Displacement, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ) for the Global Compact on Refugees' Programme of Action, bringing together perspectives from a humanitarian and a development point of view. It is based on the experiences of DRC Diaspora Programme, DEMAC and GIZ, as well as consultations with diaspora communities in Europe for possible modalities of diaspora engagement.

The objective of this paper is to ensure that the voices and perspectives of diaspora organisations will be reflected in the Global Compact on Refugee's Programme of Action. Diasporas are dispersed collectives residing outside their country of origin who "maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homeland and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries" (Sheffer: 2003, 9-10).

Diasporas include first generation emigrants and their descendants, former refugees and asylum seekers. "Diaspora and refugee overlap significantly and are neither linear, nor static categories. The terms "refugee" and "diaspora" are situational identities that overlap and shift over time and depending on context. There is no bright line demarcation". (Research paper No.278: 2016, UNHCR, 4)

DRC, DEMAC and GIZ are focusing in this paper on diaspora organisations which are formally constituted entities comprising diaspora members that operate in their countries of settlement and countries of origin, and may also work in neighbouring (third) countries. Their unique connection and understanding of their home country (and in some cases neighbouring countries) plays a vital role in humanitarian relief and development.

### [DRC Diaspora Programme, DEMAC consortium and GIZ' recommended overall success criteria for the GCR](#)

DRC Diaspora Programme, DEMAC and GIZ' overall ambition for the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) is that it becomes an instrument that improves the international community's performance in fulfilling refugees' rights to protection and durable solutions. That it will result in better opportunities for refugees and host communities to live in dignity where needs are

met, protection is ensured, self-reliance is possible and abilities to pursue solutions are available.

DRC Diaspora Programme, DEMAC and GIZ consider the diaspora an important actor contributing to the overall success of the GCR who needs to be part of any “whole-of-society”-approach. Diaspora contributes individually to solutions (e.g. remittances), but also organized in structures such as networks, associations, businesses etc.

**DRC Diaspora Programme, DEMAC and GIZ consider the following two new parameters to be included in the Global Compact on Refugees:**

**1. Participation and Consultation of diasporas and former refugees in the “whole of society” approach**

The GCR must be an instrument that places the interests of refugees and their host communities at the centre, and allows affected people to influence the political as well as the practical implementation of future comprehensive refugee responses. It requires clear roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability in a new “whole-of-society” approach to refugee response.

**2. Inclusion of diaspora communities in the global refugee response group.**

These core parameters inform DRC Diaspora Programme, DEMAC and GIZ’ recommendations for the Programme of Action below, which structure is aligned to the thematic consultations and the associated concept papers.

## Pillar 1: Measures to be taken at the onset of a large movement of refugees

### **Preparedness: How can we better prepare for and respond rapidly to large movements of refugees?**

Diaspora communities are providing direct cash transfers, sending skills volunteers with local knowledge, and compiling first-hand crisis information from affected populations.

New technologies, such as mobile phones, e-banking and social media networks, have facilitated the establishment of virtual connections between the Diasporas and the populations affected by disasters in their home countries and neighboring countries. Diasporas play a significant role in delivering early assistance through e-vouchers and cash transfers that empower the affected communities and can be provided quickly. In addition to direct disaster donations, diaspora communities are establishing NGOs, charities, associations and foundations to provide humanitarian assistance. In the last 10 years, diaspora communities from Haiti, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Sierra Leone, Pakistan and various Asian countries have been significant sources of donations, volunteers and information for humanitarian emergencies

### **Diaspora Good Practices: the Ebola response by the Sierra Leonean diaspora in UK**

Though not related to a refugee crisis, the Ebola response by the Sierra Leonean diaspora in UK represents a good practice of the specific value that diaspora can add.

During the Ebola response the diasporas adapted messages to deep rooted cultural practices and beliefs and managed to share messages more practical and credible.

The Sierra Leonean UK Diaspora Ebola Response Taskforce (SLUKDERT) was established by SL diaspora in London in November 2014 to harness diaspora skills and resources of UK-based SL diaspora responding to the Ebola crisis in their country of origin. **By serving as an interface between key stakeholders addressing the Ebola crisis and the SL diaspora in the UK, it helped to coordinate efforts undertaken by diaspora organizations and individuals, facilitated dialogue and encouraged the sharing of best practices among the many diaspora organizations.** Five different working groups on education, equipment and supplies, communications, lobbying and advocacy, finance and fundraising, and human resources

fostered links between organisations active in the same sector. Through the organization of meetings and conferences, fundraising events and road shows, **SLUKDERT mobilized diaspora healthcare and other professionals to assist with the response. It also mapped interventions of diaspora organizations to better coordinate with local groups in Sierra Leone.** As a result of successful advocacy and media appearances, SLUKDERT was invited by the UK government to liaise and coordinate with international organizations about their intended health interventions in SL and introduced to UN agencies and NGOs to receive pledges of assistance. When the situation in Sierra Leone improved at the end of 2014, the taskforce committed itself to continue facilitating dialogue between organizations, link fundraising efforts and to collaborating with other Diaspora organizations as many initiatives indicated a willingness to play a part in assisting in the post-Ebola situation.

### **Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper**

#### **Global Refugee Response Group**

Including diasporas in the global refugee response group

#### **Solidarity Conferences**

Inviting diaspora representatives to the Solidarity Conferences

### **Additional recommendations for the Programme of Action**

Diasporas have proven effective first responders in acute situations. The Programme of Action should refer to the potential role and capacity of diaspora groups as catalysts of first response. Including diaspora communities in the mapping of actors that can contribute to needs assessments, risk analysis, planning and preparedness.

Mapping and mobilizing diaspora resources for standby mechanisms to reinforce staffing and additional resources with relevant language skills, cultural understanding and competencies.

**Reception: How can we support States to receive large numbers of refugees in a safe and dignified manner?**

**Diaspora and DRC good practices: volunteers and staff with relevant language skills and cultural background to receive large numbers of refugees.**

## **Syrian diaspora organisation providing psychosocial support for Syrian refugees in Turkey**

Barada Help for Syria (*Barada Syrienhilfe*) is a registered humanitarian and medical NGO, established by Syrian diaspora in Germany in 2012. It provides relief and medical aid to affected communities inside Syria through its wide-ranging local networks. 22 volunteers, Christians and Muslims, doctors and students, engineers and self-employed, run the operations from an office in Hof in southern Germany. Barada Help for Syria works across a range of sectors, including food security, sanitation, water and hygiene, education, and healthcare, in addition to **psychosocial support for Syrian refugees in Turkey**. Barada Help for Syria has cooperated in different activities with Syrian diaspora organisations from Germany as well as the German NGO Green Helmets. Through its educational projects, Barada Help for Syria seek to build bridges of interreligious understanding and hereby to contribute to a resolution of the Syrian conflict, a commitment it was awarded for in 2015.

## **Findings from DRC's response to the refugee situation in Greece in 2015/16**

DRC set up operations in Greece in late November 2015 to provide assistance to and enhance the protection of refugees and migrants passing through and – at a later stage – staying in Greece. An internal evaluation found out that **deploying national staff from other DRC operations with relevant language skills and cultural background added a lot of value to DRC's operation in Greece** and should be replicated in the future.

Recruiting protection staff with the relevant technical and language skills has been a challenge for all organizations operating in Greece. DRC addressed this issue in an innovative way by creating a protection trainee program. Through the program, **graduates of relevant disciplines (law, development, social policy or similar) who speak Farsi, Arabic or another language in high demand among refugees and migrants in Greece – which often meant that the graduates were members of the diaspora – were hired and provided with protection training to support protection monitoring. This approach could be refined and replicated, making use of relevant resources than enable good protection programming.**

## Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper

### Support for reception arrangements:

Mobilizing diaspora networks and resources for standby mechanisms to reinforce staffing and additional resources with relevant language skills, cultural understanding and competencies to support initial reception of new arrivals.

### Additional recommendations for the Programme of Action

Consultations with refugees/diasporas in Europe about their experiences along the route would yield valuable information for support and protection in countries of origin and along the transit route.

Governments, INGOs and NGOs should increase their consultations with diaspora aid providers in order to improve the sharing of knowledge with regard to different modes of interventions, as well as benefit from diasporas' local knowledge and information, personal ties, and access in their home countries. Dialogue forums and common spaces should be established to enhance cooperation between diaspora relief actors and the conventional humanitarian system in countries of origin and destination and reduce the lack of trust which can prevent the sharing of information.

## Specific Needs: How can we address specific needs within large movements?

### Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper

#### Supporting the identification of persons with specific needs:

Mobilizing diaspora resources for standby mechanisms to reinforce staffing and additional resources with relevant language skills, cultural understanding and competencies to support the identification of persons with specific needs.

## Pillar 2 & 3: Meeting needs and supporting communities

### **Resource mobilization: How can we mobilize more resources for humanitarian and development assistance to host States?**

Syrian diaspora communities began to dispatch food aid to affected communities inside Syria and refugees in neighbouring countries since mid-2011. Since then, they have disseminated medical supplies, equipment and drugs as well as provided cash for hospital maintenance and salaries for doctors to render care to the sick, organised aid deliveries of tent materials, clothing and fuel; and educated/provided scholarships and school materials for Syrian children and youth in emergency situations. Numerous humanitarian organisations established by Syrian diaspora are today at the forefront of the humanitarian response, providing medical care and relief inside hard-to-reach areas across lines in almost every Syrian province (Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015).

The goal of two-way communication is not only to spread information, but to enable populations to give information on their needs to stakeholders, and respond in return by giving them better services. Diasporas can have access, information and knowledge that can ensure accountability to affected population.

#### **Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper**

##### **Mobilizing more resources:**

Adding diaspora organisations' information to assess the evolution of the refugees' needs and address data and evidence gaps.

##### **Additional recommendations for the Programme of Action**

Creating a digital platform linking refugee needs with the diaspora's financial and in-kind resources

Sharing needs analysis within the diaspora organizations to enable them to respond to the most urgent needs when sending their collective pooling of resources

## **Inclusion into national systems: How can we support the inclusion of refugees in national systems and services?**

### **Diaspora Good Practice: Diaspora organisation runs trauma therapy training facility in southern Turkey**

The German–Syrian Association for the Promotion of Freedom and Human Rights (*Deutsch–Syrischer Verein zur Förderung der Freiheiten und Menschenrechte, DSV*) is a registered humanitarian and development NGO, established by first and second generation Syrian diaspora in Weiterstadt, Germany, in 2011. DSV operates from an office in Darmstadt with two fulltime staffers and 65 voluntaries, a third of whom are medical doctors and physiotherapists. The major focus of the DSV's relief activities lies in providing healthcare inside Syria and the neighboring countries. It has trucked medical aid convoys and ambulances loaded with medical supplies into contested areas in northern Syria and **refugee camps in Turkey, supported rehabilitation facilities in Jordan and Turkey**, established five infirmaries in Syria, and ensured the work of an intensive care station in Aleppo governorate. In 2014, **DSV established a trauma psychology and therapy training centre for psychologists, educators and social workers in Gaziantep to improve psychological care for Syrian refugees in Turkey**. DSV cooperated in several projects with Islamic Relief Germany and GIZ and received financial support from the German Federal Foreign Office and GIZ, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Since the mass arrival of Syrian refugees in Germany from July and August 2015 on, DSV organized volunteers providing **assistance to Syrian refugees in the city of Darmstadt**. At the end of 2015, DSV was awarded by the Federal State of Hessen for the exemplary commitment of its active members, the outstanding civic engagement and its support work as focal point for the integration of Syrian refugees in Hessen.

### **Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper**

#### **Health**

Diaspora-based physicians can be mobilized as resource for phone or web-based helpline to support the inclusion of refugees as health workers in the host country's health system.

## **Education**

Facilitating skills transfer and training/mentoring by the diaspora to support refugees who are or could be engaged as teachers.

## **Economic inclusion: How can we enhance economic inclusion and promote livelihood opportunities for refugees in a way that benefits host countries and communities?**

### **Diaspora Good Practice: Homs League Abroad**

The Germany based association Homs League Abroad e.V. supports young Syrian refugee women in Turkey in order to strengthen their economic inclusion and self-reliance through the provision of livelihood opportunities. The diaspora association provides training in tailoring and life-skills; they provide Turkish language classes and seminars to inform refugee women about their rights. The association's project is financially supported by GIZ, on behalf of BMZ.

## **Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper**

### **Technical and resource support to livelihoods**

Skills, knowledge and resource transfer from the diaspora community to provide technical advice or to deploy resources and expertise to facilitate access to economic opportunities by refugees in host communities.

Capacity-building interventions provided by the diaspora with necessary language and cultural background to better match learners' needs.

Establishing links with diaspora entrepreneurs for products made by refugees via local social enterprises.

### **Additional recommendations for the Programme of Action**

Mentoring and business support from the diaspora (via Skype or online platform) for refugees and vulnerable groups in host communities

**Innovation: How can we bring innovation to humanitarian assistance to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability?**

**Diaspora Good Practice: Mapping platform to assist the relief responders connect with Somalia's drought victims**

**Crisis mapping system for Somalia, [www.abaaraha.org](http://www.abaaraha.org), was launched by a group of volunteers**, in order to assist the relief responders connect with drought victims. The platform collects data from a wide range of sources including social media, and has established tools and approaches to assess the accuracy and relevance of incoming crowd-sourced reports via text, e-mail, photo, video and social media reports.

### **Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper**

#### **Data collection and use**

Including data collection from the diaspora to fill gaps in analysis and improve understanding of a certain context.

## **PILLAR 4: MEASURES TO BE TAKEN IN PURSUIT OF SOLUTIONS**

**Return: How can we support voluntary and sustainable return?**

**Diaspora Good Practice: the Germany based association Miteinander – Ma'an e.V**

Ma'an e.V. supports refugee children, originally from Arabic-speaking countries with language classes. The association also supports teachers among the Arabic-speaking refugees through pedagogic training. The objective is that refugee children do not lose their linguistic connection to the origin countries so that if they choose to return one they, they can more easily reintegrate. The association is financially supported by GIZ, on behalf of BMZ.

Similar initiatives of diaspora organisations playing a key role in cultural awareness and language classes can be observed in most refugee hosting countries. They are essential to maintaining the potential of sustainable return during long crisis.

Consultations with diaspora representatives and selected experts from the diaspora on relevant policy. DRC Diaspora Programme is currently facilitating discussion between members of the Afghan diaspora and the Danish authorities on different topics including returns.

Another interesting initiative to notice is Gil Murciano's initiative at the Hertie School of Governance: "Refugees as foreign policy experts: Building a political advocacy initiative"

Most diasporas also directly support the development of good conditions for return in countries of origin: they can contribute positively to infrastructure reconstruction, social cohesion and reconciliation, business engagement, etc.

### **Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper**

In regards the **rebuilding**. We would like to emphasize the role of the diaspora in supporting reconstruction efforts by investing in their country of origin, both through solidarity contribution and business engagement.

In regard to the **context of return**. We would like to recommend to also include non-refugee diaspora representatives in discussion and coordination on barriers to sustainable return and decision making processes as an experienced group of bridge builder between country of residence and country of origin.

### **Additional recommendations for the Programme of Action**

Support the role of the diaspora in hosting countries in providing cultural events and language classes; cultivating an active link to country origin. This is essential to allow for the possibility of successful return after a long stay in a host country.

Engage with diaspora towards information sharing with refugee populations on local structures, options for integration, return, etc., supporting them in making an informed choice on their solution to displacement.

Also, information exchange and collaboration with diaspora should be utilized towards evaluations of return programmes, to determine impact and actual sustainability over the longer term, supporting an increase in evidence on how returnees fare over the long term.

## **Resettlement: How can we expand access to resettlement?**

**Diaspora Good Practice: Diaspora employed in host country resettlement structure provide culture sensitivity and experience based on own integration experience to newly resettled refugees.**

The Syrian Charities and Associations Network (SCAN UK) offers cultural help, guidance and consultation to the stakeholders for a smooth resettlement of Syrian refugees in the UK. They have an agreement with the UK resettlement programme.

### **Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper**

Regarding "Ensuring the responsiveness and timeliness of resettlement programmes"

1. Employ diaspora members of the country of origin in the resettlement scheme to provide country specific, culturally sensitive support.
2. Work in close collaboration with diaspora organisation to support the resettlement work and integration of refugees

## **Complementary pathways: How can we expand access to complementary pathways?**

### **Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper**

Diaspora networks, mechanisms like Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber allow migrants and refugees to transmit information about the migration process. Diaspora network can be used to share information about available opportunities to refugees, including through counselling, awareness raising, advocacy or electronic media platforms.

## **Local Solutions: How can we make local solutions work for refugees and the communities in which they live?**

### **Diaspora Good Practice**

Diasporas play a key role in supporting well-being and local integration of asylum seekers and refugees into host country. They guide newcomers on how to behave in the new environment, provide material help when needed and services such as translation during important meetings (hospital, job, etc.). They also give important advice as per how to efficiently use resources for

essential needs. Finally they help get access to work through recommendations and networks where this is possible, and they link new arrivals to existing social communities, which contributes largely to the psychological well-being of refugees.

### **Additional recommendations for the Programme of Action**

Support the work of local diaspora organisation as strong agents of inclusion/integration for asylum seekers and refugees in the host community.

## **Cross-cutting issues**

**Whole-of-society Approach: How can we ensure a whole-of-society response to large movements of refugees and protracted situations?**

### **Feedback and recommendations to proposals in the concept paper**

Diaspora organizations could be invited to commit to supporting and engaging in the various platforms adopted in this programme of action (global network of solidarity).