

High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges 2017: "Towards a global compact on refugees"

12 & 13 December 2017

Thematic session 3: Measures to be taken in pursuit of solutions

Summary

Building on the outcomes of thematic discussion four in November 2017, this session confirmed that strengthening access to solutions is one of the most important goals of the global compact on refugees.

Some key considerations in terms of solutions included the following:

1. In many cases, a comprehensive approach is needed, which leverages durable solutions and is adapted to the specific context. The proposed global refugee response platform could play a role in bridging the global and local levels.
2. Regardless of which solution ultimately becomes available, birth and other civil registration is a key stepping stone, whether to facilitate family reunification, voluntary return, local solutions, or "refugee mobility" and agency more broadly.
3. Access to education also helps refugees to take up solutions when these become available, and concrete support by the international community, including development actors, was urged.
4. Participants discussed the importance of access to livelihoods for refugees while in exile, noting the relevance of the International Labour Organization guidelines and recommendation number 205, as well as the example of industrial parks. International support for vocational training and skills development, particularly for women and youth, was encouraged.
5. Several participants emphasized that solutions strategies work best when grounded in human rights and protection-based approaches.
6. Data collection and analysis could be strengthened, and the World Bank and UNHCR joint data centre was welcomed. The collection of interoperable data across the entire displacement continuum was encouraged.

In terms of voluntary repatriation:

- This is the preferred durable solution for many refugees. Key measures to sustain return include addressing governance and security issues, strengthening legal frameworks, ensuring access to services and supporting economic development.
- There was a call for the international community, including peace, security and development actors, to support countries of origin to promote peacebuilding and to prevent the reoccurrence of conflict.
- Participants were encouraged to ensure returns are "people-centred", and based on clear benchmarks. Premature returns can result in instability, renewed conflict and further displacement. The importance of post-return monitoring was stressed, with particular attention to the specific risks faced by women and girls.
- Multi-year funding for local State building and community development in countries of origin could be increased, moving away from "top down" approaches.
- Tripartite agreements are an important framework for facilitating return, potentially supported by regional platforms or broader arrangements, including with the support of countries willing to provide financial and technical assistance.

- The inclusion of refugees in the design and implementation of voluntary repatriation programmes was encouraged, and the central role of refugee leadership was noted, including in terms of peacebuilding in communities of return.

With respect to third-country solutions:

- Resettlement and complementary pathways are important expressions of solidarity as well as solutions for refugees. Some participants suggested that the programme of action could encourage States to expand access to resettlement through existing resettlement programmes and by supporting the establishment of programmes in new and emerging resettlement States.
- The programme of action could further encourage increased resettlement quotas, as well as multi-year commitments. The dedication of 10 per cent of resettlement places to emergency cases identified by UNHCR was welcomed as a concrete target for consideration.
- The annual tripartite consultations on resettlement are an important forum that could be built on in the programme of action. There was also support for core groups, which play a vital role in coordinating and mobilizing resettlement opportunities for specific situations. The emerging “resettlement countries joint support mechanism” was highlighted as a useful tool to assist new resettlement States.
- In addition to resettlement, an expansion of complementary pathways to third countries is potentially one of the most important contributions of the global compact.
- The humanitarian corridor initiative established in Italy with support from faith-based organizations could serve as a model. The potential of private sponsorship programmes was also discussed, and further consideration of the scope for regional frameworks to facilitate free movement for refugees was encouraged.
- An additional suggestion was to include pledges for resettlement or complementary pathways as part of UNHCR’s annual Pledging Conference, in order to provide visibility to these efforts.

Finally, with respect to local solutions:

- Participants were challenged to consider how the international community can work together to make it a “win” to provide local solutions to refugees. Significant and predictable support is required, and it was suggested that the global refugee response platform could act as a broker between hosting and other countries to ensure this. The development of country-specific “compacts” could also be considered.
- Support for changes in legislative frameworks to ensure that they are up to date and able to facilitate local solutions, where appropriate, was emphasized. Capacity-building for national institutions to enable reform was encouraged.
- Similarly, support by the international community for measures to remove discrimination, optimize resources and ensure access to services in countries offering local solutions was urged.
- The role of cities in providing support for the integration of refugees was highlighted.
- Finally, the role of preparedness and long-term planning to provide a basis for local solutions was noted. This could build on lessons from forecast-based financing approaches and long-term development support provided by countries such as Germany.

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