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TARGETING DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING  
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR FINDING DURABLE SOLUTIONS  
FOR PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Humanitarian assistance and development have usually been seen as distinct areas of national and global governance. However, the gap between refugee and returnee assistance programmes and long-term development efforts is a central hurdle in the way of both sustainable repatriation in countries of origin and the promotion of self-reliance and local integration in countries of asylum. In this context, and drawing upon approaches included in the Agenda for Protection,<sup>1</sup> UNHCR's Framework for Durable Solutions<sup>2</sup> has emerged as an important means of better integrating refugees into development planning and responding to the problem of protracted refugee situations.

2. The Framework has two explicit aims. The first is to improve international burden sharing to build refugee protection and reception capacities in developing countries; the second, to improve access to durable solutions. To meet these goals, the Framework sets out a series of concepts related to the targeting of development assistance. These focus on two areas: countries of origin, and host countries. In both cases, the principle of government ownership of the process is paramount.

II. COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

3. With respect to countries of origin, the "4Rs" concept of repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction focuses on improving the sustainability of voluntary repatriation. It does this by fostering the capacities and institutional partnerships necessary to ensure the smooth transition from emergency relief to long-term development. Its premise is that repatriation must involve more than transferring refugees across a border; rather, it must strive to create an environment conducive to sustainable return and reintegration. To succeed in this task it must nurture partnerships with a range of government and development actors.

4. As acknowledged by UNHCR's Executive Committee in 2004, it is also crucial to ensure that appropriate levels of security, social services and economic opportunity are available to returnees. The idea of addressing the gap between relief and development builds upon the partnerships between UNHCR, the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organization and the World Food Programme. It also ties into the European Union's approach of linking relief, reconstruction and development.

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<sup>1</sup> A/AC.96/965/Add.1, 26 June 2002

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern, Geneva, May 2003

5. The 4Rs concept is no longer uncontroversial. It simply combines the notion of voluntary repatriation with the idea of post-conflict reconstruction. The latter has been part of mainstream development discourse since the late 1990s. Countries of origin rarely pose objections to return, while countries of asylum are keen to focus on voluntary repatriation and reintegration as the ideal durable solution. For their part, donor States also have a strong interest in the process of reintegration, reconstruction and peacebuilding. As a consequence, major development agencies already have mechanisms focusing on post-conflict reconstruction. The challenge now is to build a framework for institutional collaboration to ensure the smooth implementation of such approaches.

6. There has been significant progress in establishing such a collaborative framework covering various United Nations agencies. Furthermore, discussions between UNHCR and the World Bank have looked into overlaps between the 4Rs and the Bank's programmes for post-conflict situations and low-income countries. As a result of inter-agency collaboration and commitment by donors, it has been possible to apply the 4Rs in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. In each case, the United Nations country team has tried to lead a process of integrated planning in relation to return.

7. The case of Liberia shows how the 4Rs can improve the prospects for sustainable repatriation. Following the end of the 14-year civil war in the country and the exile of former dictator Charles Taylor in 2003, UNHCR began to organize the return of some 320,000 refugees from neighbouring States. The implementation of tripartite agreements between UNHCR, the Liberian Transitional Government and the neighbouring host States began in October 2004. An operations plan for return and reintegration is expected to run until 2007.

8. In order to facilitate reintegration, more than 30 community projects have been implemented in the counties of Bong, Grand Gedeh, Montserrado and Nimba. Given the scale of destruction during the conflict, the projects aim to rebuild local infrastructure, water supplies, schools and sanitation. To ensure local and national ownership of the projects, receiving communities and returnees have participated in the planning process. Furthermore, project proposals have been submitted to district development committees and incorporated within national transition strategies.

9. The Liberian example demonstrates the extent to which UNHCR's search for durable solutions is drawing on a range of implementing partners, including Non-governmental Organizations. An example of the latter is the Environmental Foundation for Africa, which has been conducting workshops on environmental rehabilitation.

10. Reintegration in Liberia has also drawn upon another innovation related to the 4Rs, the concept of Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR). Developed by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations as a programme for ex-combatants, it seeks to ease the transition from conflict to peace in a manner conducive to sustainable return. It is particularly important in West Africa, given the number of refugees and internally displaced persons in the region who were combatants or child soldiers.

### III. HOST COUNTRIES

11. While the protracted confinement of refugees to camps and closed settlements is a severe restriction of their rights, it is important to acknowledge the concerns of refugee-hosting States. Countries of asylum need help to overcome the political and economic obstacles that prevent them from finding alternatives to confining refugees within camps. These States need to be assisted and encouraged to allow refugees greater freedom of movement, access to social services and the right to earn a living. In

this context, the two key concepts set out in the Framework for Durable Solutions are Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR) and Development through Local Integration (DLI). Both recognize that refugees need not inevitably be perceived as a burden but could, in the right circumstances, be “agents of development”.

12. The DAR concept covers additional development assistance to countries hosting large numbers of refugees; promotion of a better quality of life and self-reliance for refugees pending durable solutions; and a better quality of life for host communities. In other words, DAR is about empowering the productive capacities and self-reliance of refugees as well as supporting host-country and local-community development. The concept is similar to Development through Local Integration (DLI). The latter, however, relates to situations in which the host State provides the opportunity for gradual integration of refugees. Here, additional development assistance would facilitate refugees' economic self-reliance, socio-cultural integration and access to legal rights, culminating in citizenship.

13. In contrast to the principles behind the 4Rs, on which consensus has come relatively easily, discussions on DAR and DLI have advanced more slowly. Whereas repatriation is widely accepted as the most desirable durable solution, local integration is more likely to be resisted by host States. Receiving countries usually have strong concerns about the economic, political, environmental and security implications of moving beyond encampment. Fostering the conditions in which those concerns can be addressed, and at the same time reducing the long-term confinement of refugees to camps, depends on international cooperation and inter-agency coordination.

14. DAR promotes self-sufficiency through local integration and the provision of services for refugees. While not necessarily according refugees full citizenship, it allows freedom of movement and access to land or employment, provides for education, health facilities and housing, and creates opportunities to form social networks beyond the immediate community. It may ultimately promote repatriation by better equipping refugees with the skills and autonomy they need to return home. That was the case with Angolan refugees in Zambia, whose contribution to the local economy was widely acknowledged. Though they had the right to free movement and to earn a livelihood on land provided by the State, many returned home once conditions there improved.

15. Both DAR and DLI build on the legacy of UNHCR's attempts in the 1980s to promote local integration by using development assistance as a burden-sharing tool. Partnerships between UNHCR and development agencies such as UNDP were promoted to help African States host the large refugee populations in their rural areas. The linking of development with local integration also builds upon the experience of UNHCR in Mexico during the 1990s, when a multi-year rural-development programme supported the integration of Guatemalan refugees in the States of Campeche and Quintana Roo. These were one-off applications, but UNHCR is now trying to apply a broad collaborative framework across the United Nations system.

16. DLI is part of the Zambia Initiative, which supports the host Government's policy of local integration for Angolan refugees. In Serbia and Montenegro, UNHCR has collaborated with the Government and other partners to provide housing, micro-credit facilities and vocational training to locally settled refugees displaced by conflict in the Balkans. DAR has most notably been applied to Uganda's Self-Reliance Strategy. These cases have been used to demonstrate the potential of targeting development assistance with a focus on host States.

17. All these initiatives attempt to build on the existing activities of States and organizations. Denmark, for instance, has its own strategy to promote DAR. It has agreed to assist Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda to support the host country's self-reliance strategy. Japan, as part of its Trust Fund for Human Security initiative, has agreed to provide development assistance to encourage self-reliance

among Somali refugees in Ethiopia. Meanwhile, in 2004, Ecuador emerged as a possible recipient of DAR; and the United Nations Assessment Mission to Ecuador's northern border region recommended including Colombian refugees within development plans for the north of the country.

#### IV. DONOR TRENDS

18. A principal constraint to promoting the widespread application of DAR has been the reluctance of donor States to provide more resources. For their part, many developing host States fear that aid destined for them may be diverted to assist refugees. The debate has been somewhat polarized, with host States fearing that initiatives to provide DAR are an attempt to shift the burden to regions of origin. In 2004, UNHCR's Executive Committee concluded that assistance to refugee populations and host communities to promote self-reliance is one element of a burden-sharing framework. According to the ExCom, this could be developed in the context of an international response, particularly to protracted refugee situations.

19. The inability of donor States to provide new resources is partly attributable to the separation at government level of development and refugee issues. A crucial task for UNHCR, therefore, has been to mobilize donor commitments to support the Framework for Durable Solutions and encourage greater coordination across the branches of national government. In this regard, a number of bilateral and multilateral donor initiatives that look at refugees within a development context have emerged. For example, the World Bank's focus on post-conflict reconstruction is particularly relevant to the 4Rs. Meanwhile, European Union funds have supported UNHCR's Strengthening Protection Capacity Project.

20. The commitments of States to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals are also relevant to the search for durable solutions, given that the levels of human development of refugees often fall below those of non-refugees. Millennium Development Goals such as the eradication of extreme poverty, universal access to primary education, gender equality and reductions in infant mortality are very germane to the need to focus resources on refugees.

21. The 2002 Monterey Financing for Development Summit saw a number of pledges by States and international organizations to increase financial and technical cooperation for development. In particular, it reiterated the central role of official development assistance (ODA) for States with the lowest capacity to attract private direct investment. It also pointed to the need to target assistance more effectively, and aspired to commit at least 0.7 per cent of the GDP of industrialized States to ODA.

22. In 2005, the World Summit on the Millennium Declaration and the G-8 discussions on the Africa Plan for trade, aid and debt relief highlighted opportunities to mobilize resources. Following the Gleneagles G-8 Summit, G-8 countries pledged to increase the overall aid to developing countries by US\$50 billion, doubling the aid for Africa by US\$25 billion by 2010. In this regard, promoting the productive capacities of refugees and placing security issues within a displacement context could prove to be an extremely effective means of garnering wider development assistance.

#### V. INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION

23. The UNHCR 2004 review process highlighted the growing links between peace, security, development and humanitarianism. Given this complex inter-connectedness, UNHCR cannot do everything alone. But it has an important role in advocacy and coordination. In implementing the goals of the Framework for Durable Solutions, UNHCR is not aspiring to become a development agency. Rather, it seeks to act as a catalyst, creating the collaborative framework under which other actors can better assist the displaced.

24. In this context, UNHCR has fostered a number of inter-agency partnerships. Most significantly, it has joined the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). Created by the United Nations Secretary-General in 1997, UNDG seeks to improve the effectiveness of development work at the country level. In 2004, the group adopted a Guidance Note on Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons that stresses the need for United Nations country teams to consider the search for durable solutions for displaced persons. UNHCR collaborates with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, especially with regard to post-conflict development cooperation, and with the World Bank. In the latter case, it advocates more systematic inclusion of population displacement in the Bank's poverty-reduction strategies. These initiatives highlight the importance of mainstreaming the needs of the displaced across the United Nations system, particularly within a development context.