

**OIC Ministerial Conference on the Problems of Refugees in the Muslim World**

**27-29 November 2006**

**Durable Solutions**

**I. Introduction**

1. This working document is prepared by UNHCR for the OIC Ministerial Conference on the Problems of Refugees in the Muslim World as a background document for the discussion on solutions to refugee and returnee situations. The paper aims to draw attention to the reasons for intensifying the search for durable solutions as well as initiatives and conditions necessary for achieving sustainable solutions. Furthermore, it illustrates best practices for OIC member States to draw upon in search for solutions to specific refugee problems.

2. The mandate of UNHCR is to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees and other persons of concern,<sup>1</sup> and to help bring about durable solutions for these groups. Finding durable solutions to displacement is not only a humanitarian issue. It requires close cooperation among partners and stakeholders in both the humanitarian and the development field. Achieving durable solutions for displaced populations will advance UNHCR's mandate as well as contribute towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as other commitments mentioned in the Millennium Declaration.<sup>2</sup>

3. Despite the continued relevance of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol and regional conventions and declarations, these documents cannot sufficiently address all the pressing issues pertaining to refugee protection in today's world. Recognizing these challenges, UNHCR in late 2000 launched the Global Consultations on International Protection with a view to exploring how best to revitalize the existing international protection regime while ensuring its flexibility to address new problems. The Agenda for Protection<sup>3</sup>, a programme of action adopted as a result of the Global consultations, reflects a wide cross-section of concerns and recommendations of States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as refugees themselves. The Agenda is also the premise for new initiatives on the part of UNHCR aimed at pursuing durable solutions for refugees more effectively, involving self-reliance and poverty reduction as core components of international protection of

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<sup>1</sup> Returning refugees (returnees), stateless persons and, in some situations, internally displaced persons (IDPs).

<sup>2</sup> Most of the MDGs are relevant to refugee / IDP situations as well. Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education; Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women; Goal 5: Improve maternal health; Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability; and Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

<sup>3</sup> The Agenda was endorsed by UNHCR's Executive Committee and welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2002.

refugees, notably the Framework for Durable Solutions<sup>4</sup> and the Convention Plus initiative<sup>5</sup>.

4. So far, the international community has largely been considering displaced populations as a humanitarian issue in need of a humanitarian response. Both the Framework for Durable Solutions and the Convention Plus initiative are based on an understanding that it is not enough to focus solely on the humanitarian dimension of refugee problems. It is necessary also to consider the economic, social and political dimensions, and consequently to target development assistance towards solutions for refugees to ensure more comprehensive and effective responses. At the same time, durable solutions for refugees cannot be attained by UNHCR alone, but is a collective task requiring partnerships with donors, refugee-hosting countries, countries of origin and the development community, including other United Nations agencies and NGOs. This is necessary to maximize the opportunities to respond to the challenges inherent in refugee and returnee situations today.

## II. The Issues at Stake

5. To understand the need for durable solutions better, it is important to consider the present situation of refugees in protracted situations<sup>6</sup> in countries of asylum and the situation of returnees in post-conflict situations in countries of origin.

### *(a) Protracted Refugee Situations*

6. Civil wars and violent conflicts are increasingly of an extended duration and thus have led to the emergence of a type of refugee situation that is protracted in nature, where refugees have no immediate or mid-term prospects of finding sustainable solutions to their plight.

7. By the end of 2005, there were more than thirty protracted refugee situations globally accounting for approximately five million refugees<sup>7</sup>, representing an increase from 29 situations in 1995, even though the absolute number of refugees living in protracted situations fell from 8.4 to 5.0 million. The average length of protracted refugee situations has increased from 14 years in 1995 to 17 years in 2005.

8. Looking closer at the situations in OIC Member States, at least 13 countries have been hosting refugees from neighbouring countries for at least five consecutive years, accounting for 2.8 million (more than 50 percent of the global figures of refugees in protracted refugee situations).

9. Figure 1 shows persons of concern to UNHCR by type of location. By the end of 2005:

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<sup>4</sup> Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and People of Concern, UNHCR, May 2003.

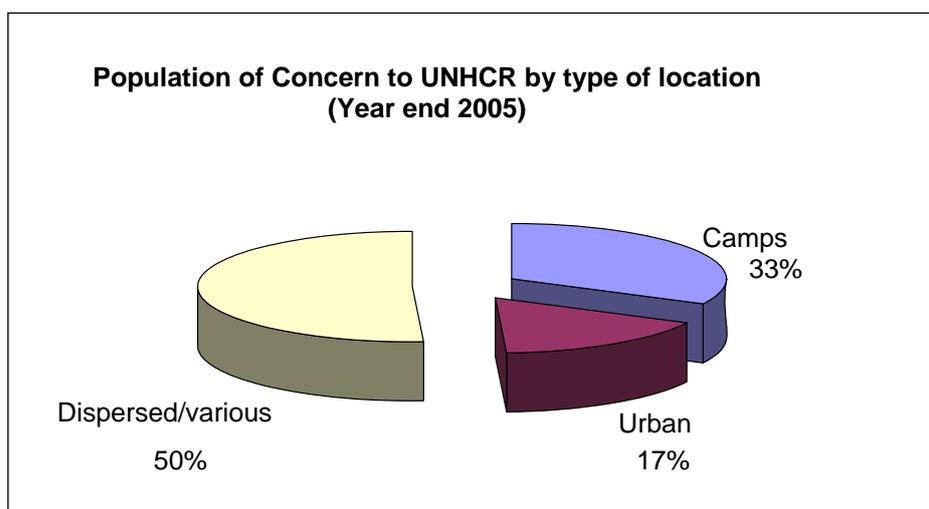
<sup>5</sup> See [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch).

<sup>6</sup> "Protracted Refugee Situations," EC/54/SC/CRP.14 Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, UNHCR, June 10, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> This figure does not include the approximately 4.3 million Palestinian refugees, which fall under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

- an estimated 33 percent were located in camps as opposed to average of 25.8 percent globally. More importantly, an estimated 43 percent of persons of concern (or 1.2 million) in major protracted refugee situations in OIC Member States were located in camps;
- approximately 17 percent were in urban locations; and,
- an estimated 50 percent were dispersed.

**Figure 1**



10. Refugees in protracted situations and particularly those in camps often do not enjoy basic rights. With no or limited access to livelihood opportunities for years, refugees become dependent from international assistance and are deprived of a life in dignity. The fact of being without any prospect for the future leads to frustrations and creates a number of protection problems among refugee communities, including domestic violence and higher risk of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

11. Countries hosting large refugee populations are often among the least developed countries and refugee-hosting communities are often located in remote, border areas where a high level of poverty prevails and few development initiatives are implemented. Refugees, particularly those in camps, frequently face restrictive asylum regulations, which limit their freedom of movement and access to education, skills training and productive livelihoods. Consequently, their potential for human growth and development is stifled. Reducing refugees to mere recipients of humanitarian assistance, limit their opportunities to contribute positively to the economy and society of the asylum country. Idleness and dependency can fuel frustration, tension and even conflict within communities.<sup>8</sup>

12. Developing countries hosting refugees, sometimes for decades, do not consider refugees or remote host communities as development priorities. A common feature in development planning is that transition and recovery plans by governments concerned do not systematically incorporate the needs and potential of refugees, who are in most cases not part of the national development planning. The donor community and the United Nations system do not systematically include refugees in

<sup>8</sup> Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and People of Concern, UNHCR, May 2003, p. 4

their development planning either. Thus, refugees and the population hosting them are often an excluded and marginalized group, with refugees being “passive” recipients of humanitarian aid. Ignoring their needs in development planning and, more importantly, their potential economic contributions to society, neglects the reality that self-reliant refugees can contribute to host communities and the country’s development efforts.<sup>9</sup>

13. The Agenda for Protection has underscored the importance of realizing comprehensive durable solution strategies, especially for protracted refugee situations. This reflects past experiences where comprehensive strategies and plans of action have proven successful in resolving long-standing refugee crises. As the number of protracted refugee situations has increased in the last decade, and their average duration correspondingly risen, the need for the establishment and implementation of comprehensive strategies has become more acute.

14. To discharge the role expected of it in helping to resolve protracted refugee situations, UNHCR needs to **deepen international consultation and collective analysis and decision-making**, in determining the most appropriate response to protracted refugee situations and the most adequate mix of durable solutions, including for local integration and resettlement.

15. To complement this, the **engagement of key stakeholders, including governments, and inter-governmental regional organizations such as the OIC**, is needed in order to consider how broader linkages can be achieved through partnerships to ensure that repatriation, local integration and resettlement are tangible options in overall planning.

16. Finally, UNHCR **requires strong political and financial support** from donors, resettlement countries, refugee-hosting countries and countries of origin, to address comprehensively specific refugee situations, including protracted ones. The support should also include the targeting of development assistance in refugee-hosting areas, as clearly stated in the Framework for Durable Solutions.

17. While the establishment and implementation of comprehensive strategies to resolve protracted refugee situations will need to be context-specific, there are some general elements that should be included in any comprehensive strategy:

- The focus should be on a clearly defined “situation”, i.e. on a region and/or a shared refugee/IDP problem caused by the same root causes;
- The political interests of states should be factored in and a regional agreement should be sought as political backing. The comprehensive strategy should therefore complement ongoing political and peace-keeping/building processes;
- There should be clear protection and durable solutions objectives, with all three solutions included;
- It should be built on partnerships among countries of origin, host States, donors and resettlement countries, humanitarian agencies, development actors, and more importantly the populations of concern themselves and their

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, p. 4

communities. In doing so, roles, responsibilities and commitments of all stakeholders must be clearly spelled out;

- The linkages with development and poverty reductions strategies and processes (especially CCA/UNDAF, PRSPs and the MDGs) must be established from the initial stages of the strategy;
- An effective monitoring and follow-up mechanism should be included throughout the process. In other words, the strategy should not be identified solely with a “one-off” pledging conference.

18. In close coordination with its partners, UNHCR must be committed to the development and implementation of comprehensive strategies. But this also requires the commitment and sustained support of key States, both in the region and among the donors (including, if necessary, support of the UN Security Council) and the involvement of key development partners, such as the World Bank and UNDP. Finally, such strategies need to take due account of critical issues associated with forced displacement, such as the migration-asylum and migration-development nexus.

*(b) Post-Conflict Situations*

19. As is evident from Table 2, a majority of refugees and IDPs are returning to countries/ areas emerging from conflict. Many are characterized by high unemployment, high mortality rates, low education and skills levels, inadequate public services and lack of basic infrastructure. In post-conflict situations, the reintegration of returnees poses a considerable challenge. After the initial assistance provided by humanitarian actors, which is of an emergency nature, the subsequent process of reintegration to longer-term reconstruction does not occur in a seamless fashion. In the politically fragile environment, which is characteristic of post-conflict situations, returnees are often left in deprived conditions for extended periods without means and opportunities for the future. The needs of relatively small numbers of returnees are considered of minor concern compared to more pressing national development priorities in the process of rebuilding an entire country.<sup>10</sup> As a result, returnees are not systematically included in national reconstruction and rehabilitation planning and excluded from benefiting from development cooperation.<sup>11</sup> Many returnees may opt to return to their country of asylum or move on to third countries. This phenomenon of “back-flows” is witnessed in repatriation operations when reintegration is not sustainable.

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<sup>10</sup> Convention Plus Issues Paper on Targeting Development Assistance, UNHCR, June 2004, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> A study carried out by UNHCR in October 2004 (“Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: A Displacement Perspective”) found that out of 12 poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) and Interim-PRSPs in post-conflict countries, only three of them (Burundi, Sierra Leone and Bosnia & Herzegovina) comprehensively reflected issues related to returnees, while the one for Rwanda only did so partly.

**Table 2: Major voluntary repatriation / returnee movements  
from OIC Member States, 2005**

<b>Country of Asylum (from)</b>	<b>Origin (to)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Of which UNHCR assisted</b>
Islamic Rep. of Iran	Afghanistan	289,641	63,674
Pakistan	Afghanistan	461,118	449,409
Islamic Rep. of Iran	Iraq	55,267	5,272
Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	33,000	13,498
Guinea	Liberia	29,566	18,595
Sierra Leone	Liberia	6,202	4,768
Cameroon	Nigeria	7,401	7,401
Uganda	Rwanda	1,586	1,438

### **III. Durable solutions**

20. The Statute of UNHCR establishes that “The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, acting under the authority of the General Assembly, shall assume the function of providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting governments and, subject to the approval of the governments concerned, private organizations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities.”<sup>12</sup>

21. There are three durable solutions: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Promoting the self-reliance of refugees from the outset enhances the sustainability of any future durable solution. It also contribute towards enhancing refugee’s protection and dignity, helps refugees manage their time spent in exile effectively and constructively, and decrease dependency.

22. Comprehensive approaches to durable solutions, especially for the resolution of protracted and large-scale refugee situations, are extremely important and should incorporate, as appropriate and given the specifics of each refugee situation, voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Such comprehensive solutions must also incorporate a community development approach, ensuring the participation of refugee men and women, and refugee children, as appropriate, and such approach contributes to the success of all three durable solutions.

#### *Voluntary Repatriation*

23. Voluntary repatriation, where and when feasible, remains the preferred solution in the majority of refugee situations. Ensuring sustainable return, with support form the international community, is the primary responsibility of the countries of origin. Core components of voluntary repatriation are physical, legal and material safety and reconciliation. In a return situation, this implies the restoration of

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<sup>12</sup> Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, G.A. res. 428 (V), annex, 5, U.N. Doc. A/1775 (1950).

national protection and, through the reintegration process, the ability to maintain sustainable livelihoods, access basic services and fully reintegrate into communities and countries of origin. The reintegration process should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights and duties between returnees and their compatriots and equal access to services, productive assets and opportunities. Property restitution mechanisms are an important component for reintegration.<sup>13</sup>

24. As mentioned above, voluntary repatriation in conditions of safety and dignity is the durable solution most often preferred by States and refugees themselves. The desire to repatriate is so strong that, time and again, spontaneous repatriation movements occur well before UNHCR has formally launched a repatriation operation. In recent years, however, UNHCR has had to assist refugees to repatriate under less than ideal or even adverse conditions, in the absence of realistic alternatives. The notion of adverse conditions embraces both conditions in countries of asylum and countries of origin.

25. Traditionally, in determining the appropriateness of our pursuit of voluntary repatriation, UNHCR has taken into account considerations that can be considered as “bottom lines”, such the availability of meaningful protection against persecution, violence and violations of other non-derogable fundamental human rights in the country of origin, and the accessibility of protection, in fact, with the country of origin having made clear its willingness to re-extend its national protection to the returnees.

26. To make return sustainable, humanitarian actors such as UNHCR engage in initial reintegration projects in the country of origin. Many of these activities are aimed at creating conditions that are conducive for the return of refugees. In doing so, the Government of the country of origin and its humanitarian partners face a series of challenges including:

- **The logistics of return take precedence over reintegration activities.** Humanitarian agencies tend to concentrate resources and efforts in making sure that refugees return in safety and dignity, but not necessarily on making return sustainable through reintegration and linkages with rehabilitation, reconstruction and development plans.
- **Poor socio-economic conditions and destruction in the country of origin.** Refugees usually return to a devastated country or areas, in which the destruction of infrastructure is coupled with unavailability of social services and lack of employment and income-generating opportunities. Areas with high HIV prevalence exacerbate this situation.
- **A large number of refugees possess limited skills,** a constraint for sustainable reintegration. Post-conflict situations tend to require significant numbers of semi-skilled and skilled labour. While some returnees possess the required skills, the vast majority does not or has lost their previous trades and skills while in exile. The lack of self-reliance projects and employment opportunities in the countries of asylum severely undermines the potential contributions that refugees can make upon return.

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<sup>13</sup> Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities, UNHCR, May 2004, p. 3-5.

- **Returns and returnee areas are not very often considered a priority by Governments in countries of origin. At the same time, development agencies do not want to treat returnees as a distinct category.** UNHCR operations focus on individuals, families and communities, while many development partners focus on processes, institution building, technical assistance and policies. As a result, the latter prefer instead to mainstream returnees into national frameworks, policies and programmes, thus failing to address returnee-specific concerns.
- If development activities do not start early enough, return and reintegration may not be sustainable. Development agencies put a lot of emphasis on sustainability and this may mean that **programme formulation takes longer** than in traditional humanitarian practice.
- In post-conflict situations, **there is usually an absence of adequate transition frameworks.** Humanitarian frameworks are complemented by national reconstruction or development plans, but seldom by post-conflict transition frameworks. This is changing as post-conflict needs assessments and early recovery frameworks are being established more systematically. The concept of a linear transition from relief to development is very often a fiction, as in reality they often occur at the same time, e.g. repatriation over 2 to 4 years requires simultaneous humanitarian and development assistance for at least that time period.
- **Limited data on returning refugees** and therefore difficult to measure socio-economic gaps in places of return. UNHCR still has deficient tools to assess the socio-economic characteristics of returning refugees and this represents an obstacle when UNHCR and its partners try to attract development partners to returnee-hosting areas. This problem is compounded by the lack of basic data on the areas of return.
- **Peaceful coexistence** may be elusive upon return to areas of origin as frictions may be encountered between the returnees and the population who remained, or between returnees of different ethnic origin. This may require peace building activities that are based on integrated strategies for post-conflict peace building and recovery.
- Initial reintegration efforts must contribute to broader goals than just the promotion of self-sufficiency. It is equally important to ensure that returnees and other members of society enjoy a progressively higher degree of physical, legal, social and psychological security. Only by addressing the issue of **human security** in this multi-dimensional manner, and by combining the efforts of UNHCR with those of other actors, is it possible to consolidate the reintegration process and to **break the cycle of violence.**
- **Reintegration in urban contexts is still an area where UNHCR and its partners lack expertise.** Just as the governments of asylum countries, UNHCR and NGOs often struggle to properly protect and assist refugees living in large urban centers, urban reintegration is an extremely complex task

for which the countries of origin and the international community are inappropriately resourced and staffed.

### *Local Integration*

27. In the refugee context, local integration is a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process, which requires preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population. The process of local integration is complex and gradual, comprising three distinct but inter-related legal, economic, and social and cultural dimensions, all of which are important for refugees' ability to integrate successfully as fully included members of society. The legal dimension of integration entails the host State granting refugees a secure legal status and a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements that are broadly commensurate with those enjoyed by its citizens and, over time, the possibility of naturalizing. Local integration needs to be undertaken in a manner that sustains the viability of local communities affected by the presence of refugees.

28. The concern about possible negative economic and environmental impact of large-scale refugee populations as well as the perception that exiled populations represent a threat to local, national and regional security, especially in situations where *bona fide* refugees are mixed with armed elements have in many countries created an increasingly restrictive climate for the local integration of refugees.

29. While it is important to recognize this reality, it is equally important to acknowledge that refugee problems – and the problems of refugees – cannot be adequately addressed by means of voluntary repatriation alone. An approach to the solution of refugee problems, focusing predominantly on voluntary repatriation ignores a number of important issues, such as:

- A significant proportion of the world's refugees are currently unable to repatriate in safety and dignity;
- Long-term care and maintenance programmes bring few lasting benefits to host countries, donor States or to refugees themselves;
- Refugees who are unable to attain a certain degree of self-reliance or to benefit from local integration are most likely to move on to urban areas or to other countries and regions, thereby exacerbating the problem of irregular migration;
- The promotion of self-reliance, leading perhaps to the local integration of some, can in certain circumstances be an appropriate and viable means of addressing refugee situations.

30. There are situations in which the promotion of local integration has good potential to succeed. Such is the case when refugees share a language, a culture or an ethnic origin with the host community. Similarly, when refugees bring particular skills to their country of asylum, when they move into areas where land is available, and when their presence can attract resources and investments which would not otherwise be available to the area, a response based solely on the expectation of an eventual repatriation movement is not necessarily the most effective one.

31. While it is true to say that the pursuit of local integration has received relatively little support from the international community, local integration received renewed attention within the context of the UNHCR Agenda for Protection. It would be wrong to give the impression that refugees are incapable of settling peacefully and productively in the countries where they have found asylum. Indeed, local integration is not only the most important solution for refugees in many European and American countries, but there is also evidence to suggest that in developing regions, most notably in Africa, large numbers of refugees are “self-settled”, supporting themselves without international assistance and living in harmony with the local population.

### *Resettlement*

32. Resettlement is an important instrument to provide protection and a durable solution for refugees unable to return home or to remain in their country of refuge. Resettlement also contributes to international solidarity and to maintaining the fundamental principles of protection by assisting countries of refuge in the task of caring for refugees.<sup>14</sup> Resettled refugees are normally granted some form of long-term residence permit, which in many cases include the opportunity to become a naturalized citizen.

33. It should be recognized that **resettlement is a resource-intensive activity and relies heavily on the efficiency and quality of processes in other work areas of UNHCR**, such as registration, refugee status determination, and protection and community services. Investment in these areas needs to be enhanced to support strategic resettlement initiatives.

34. UNHCR and the international community need **to widen the circle of States already doing resettlement**. This was an aspiration set out in the Agenda for Protection and the Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement. We can collectively **do more to support emerging resettlement countries** to create and/or consolidate their capacities, through twinning and other arrangements, and learn from best practices.

35. There is also **a need to diversify the geographical distribution** of available resources and resettlement places so that there are resettlement opportunities available in all regions of the world.

36. It is necessary to **consistently include resettlement** in regional protection strategies, Comprehensive Plans of Action (CPA) and UNHCR Country Operations Plans (COP).

## **IV. The Framework for Durable Solutions**

37. Experience over the past five decades has confirmed that durable solutions in terms of self-reliance, sustainable return and reintegration, or local integration cannot be found by UNHCR acting alone, but require the active engagement and contribution

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, chapter I/ 1

of States and other partners. This is recognized in the Agenda for Protection, which calls on UNHCR to encourage multilateral and bilateral partners to extend tangible support for initiatives aimed at achieving durable solutions, notably to make voluntary repatriation sustainable and to underpin self-reliance and local integration. The Agenda also encourages states to consider allocating development funds to programmes simultaneously benefiting refugees and the local population in host countries, and the latter to consider including refugee-hosting areas in their national development plans. In 2003, UNHCR developed the Framework for Durable Solutions with the aim of providing methodological models to facilitate the targeting of development assistance more effectively to underpin and sustain solutions for refugees. The Framework proposes three programming concepts:

- Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR) to prepare refugees for solutions;
- Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (4Rs) to ensure sustainable return and reintegration; and,
- Development through Local Integration (DLI) to promote local integration, where feasible

#### *DAR*

38. The DAR concept focuses on host countries and seeks to empower refugees by allowing them to use their productive capacity to become self-reliant, while at the same time supporting host country and local community development. It intends to provide additional development assistance, improve burden sharing for countries hosting large numbers of refugees, and to promote a better quality of life for host communities as well as a better quality of life and self-reliance for refugees pending a durable solution. DAR programmes are currently being implemented in northern Uganda and western Zambia, while Ecuador is considering the launching of a DAR programme.

#### *4Rs*

39. The 4Rs approach focuses on countries of origin and on improving the sustainability of repatriation. It combines the notion of voluntary repatriation with post-conflict reconstruction and places emphasis on the need to incorporate displacement and, in particular, returnees in long-term development planning. The aim is to ensure that more resources are allocated to create an environment inside the countries of origin conducive to facilitating sustainable repatriation while preventing the recurrence of mass outflows. The 4Rs approach was pilot-tested in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, and is currently being used in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia and Sudan.

#### *DLI*

40. DLI focuses on situations in which the country of asylum provides an opportunity for those refugees who are unable to repatriate, to find a solution to their plight by gradual integration. It follows the granting of asylum and assistance to settle in order for the refugees to live independently within the community. In these situations, DLI solicits additional development assistance to help facilitate economic

self-reliance, socio-cultural integration, and access to legal rights culminating in citizenship<sup>15</sup>. Central to the success of this strategy is the attitude of the host government and the local authorities as well as a commitment on the part of the donor community to provide additional assistance. So far, no DLI programme has been implemented since the Framework for Durable Solutions was issued in 2003, yet the concept is based on the multi-annual programme in two Mexican states (Campeche and Quintana Roo) which led to the local integration of some 20,000 Guatemalan refugees and to the development of agricultural areas in southern Mexico.

## **V. Good Practices**

41. Recent years have seen a number of initiatives aiming to implement the programmatic approaches of the Framework for Durable Solutions. The following provides examples of early experiences and practices from Uganda, Afghanistan and Zambia

### *DAR in Uganda*

42. Uganda has a long-standing tradition of unique and progressive refugee policies and hosting practices. For years, Uganda has provided a favourable environment for refugees. The objective of the Government of Uganda's (GoU) current refugee policy is to find durable solutions to refugee problems by addressing refugee issues within the broader framework of government policies. The principal aims are to empower refugees and nationals to become self-reliant and to establish mechanisms that will ensure integration of services for the refugees with those of the nationals.

43. The Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS), launched in 1999, by the GoU and UNHCR, intended to increase access to and quality of services and local infrastructures in host communities to improve the quality of life of both refugees and nationals. Through the implementation of SRS services in eight key sectors of assistance (health, education, community services, agricultural production, income generation, environmental protection, water and sanitation, and infrastructure), refugee needs and their potential have increasingly been integrated into the regular programming of government structures and policies, including the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP - the country's self-developed PRSP covering 2004-2009). Moreover, local district authorities are including refugees into their population figures and their needs into specific District Development Plans.

44. A mid-term review of the SRS, jointly conducted by the GoU and UNHCR in February 2004, revealed many positive impacts of specific policies and activities implemented, namely a significant increase in food production and improved access to health and education services for both refugee and neighbouring national populations. The participation of refugees and host communities in an integrated manner is supporting the GoU in addressing problems of poverty and under-development in refugee hosting districts that could promote further peace, security

and stability in the region. The DAR is also viewed as an important mechanism for preparing refugees for eventual repatriation.

45. In 2004, following the review of the SRS' impact and responding to recommendations, it was agreed to develop the SRS into a DAR programme, as the main policy framework for refugee assistance in Uganda. Simultaneously, UNHCR began to explore opportunities to support the initiative by promoting more effective targeting of development assistance under Convention Plus.

46. The Government of Uganda, in the PEAP, stresses the importance of recognizing the critical role that hosting refugee areas play in the broader socio-economic development of the districts in which they are located and the long-term social, economic, and political stability of Uganda and its neighbours.

#### *The "4Rs strategy" in Afghanistan*

47. Afghanistan was designated as one of four operations where the 4Rs (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction) process was piloted.

48. Recognizing the organisation's own limitations in securing durable solutions for the millions of Afghans and the need for a long-term approach to sustainable reintegration of returnees in the difficult socio-economic environment in Afghanistan, UNHCR has been undertaking considerable efforts to link up with longer-term reconstruction and development programmes and actors.

49. Ownership by host governments is identified as one of the critical factors of success in the implementation of the 4Rs and, indeed, the process in Afghanistan is considered as "Government driven". Over the past few years, the Afghan Government has launched a number of National Priority Programmes (NPP). With regard to these NPPs, UNHCR's objective has been to ensure that returnee needs were taken into account in the design and the implementation of the programmes. In working towards that objective, UNHCR has concentrated its efforts on NPPs under full or partial control of the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD).

50. There has been success at introducing "returnee sensitive" programme design with the National Emergency Employment Programme (NEEP) and with the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). The first one defined a minimum of five percent returnee beneficiaries for each project while the latter adopted a geographical prioritisation formula targeting districts with the highest number of returns in each province. Another example of mainstreaming returnee needs into national programmes is the inclusion of the national Land Allocation Programme which targets i.a. landless returnees and IDPs into the National Area Based Development Programme.

#### *DAR in Zambia*

51. The Government of Zambia has taken a pioneer initiative to demonstrate that refugees can be active agents of development and valuable contributors to the economic and social life of host countries. Angolan refugees have been present in western Zambia for over thirty years. The routine provision of plots of land of

between 6 and 12 acres of fertile land on which refugees are able to grow crops has allowed the greater part of the refugees to become food self-sufficient. The refugees' contribution to the local community was apparent by the collapse in food production that took place in western Zambia following the repatriation of 220,000 Angolans in 2002.<sup>16</sup>

52. The Government of Zambia (GoZ) recognized the positive role refugees can play to alleviate poverty in refugee-hosting communities and, in 2002, embarked on the Zambia Initiative (ZI), a Government-led DAR project. The aim of ZI is to achieve local development, and in the process to find durable solutions for refugees hosted in Zambia. The ZI promotes a holistic approach in addressing the needs of remote, poor and resource-strained local host communities in order to improve the living conditions for both the refugees and the local population. Further, the GoZ realized that DAR opened avenues for additional funding.

53. The political will to consider refugees as catalysts for and contributors to local development as demonstrated through the fact that most technicians involved in the construction of schools, health posts and related skilled work under the Zambia Initiative are Angolan refugees. The local community also benefits from refugees accepting appointments in the teaching/health fields in remote areas where qualified and experienced Zambians are reluctant to go. Ultimately, the Initiative will contribute effectively to social integration, poverty reduction as well as security and stability in the region to the benefit of both refugees and the local community.

54. The ZI is benefiting both refugees planning to repatriate and refugees who will remain in Zambia. Repatriating refugees will acquire skills that will enhance their opportunities upon return to their country of origin. Voluntary repatriation may not always be possible or it might not be a viable solution for all refugees and consequently some refugees may opt to remain in Zambia. Against this background, the Government of Zambia has introduced measures to integrate needs and interests of refugees into long-term national development plans.

55. The Zambia Initiative was evaluated by a team of independent consultants in late 2005 and the findings and recommendations are currently being used to improve the management and implementation of the Initiative. The evaluation will also feed into a possible extension of the Initiative to other provinces hosting Congolese refugees.

## **VI. Recommendations**

56. UNHCR believes that the Framework for Durable Solutions and the programming approaches set out in the Framework offer a variety of tools and practices that are relevant to refugee problems in the Muslim world. By building on the productive capacities of refugees and returnees, ensuring their inclusion in national and international transition and development plans and by adopting comprehensive approaches to meet the development needs of refugees or returnees

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<sup>16</sup> Frushone, Joel, 'Unevenly Applied, More Often Denied: Refugee Rights in Africa', World Refugee Survey, 2004, p. 74-77.

and of their host communities, OIC member states will attain tangible benefits, including:

- a. redressing the economic and social impact of hosting refugees;
- b. diminishing tensions between host communities and refugees;
- c. contributing to peace and security;
- d. improving poverty reduction and human development by contributing to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, as well as addressing other displacement-related issues contained in the Millennium Declaration;
- e. strengthening of national and local capacities; and
- f. enhancing burden sharing and international solidarity.

Geneva, July 2006