

**DISPLACEMENT SOLUTIONS
AND THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

A Panel Discussion Organized by:
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and
the Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uganda to the United Nations

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Refugees, asylum-seekers and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) constitute an integral part of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, adopted by 179 governments in Cairo in September 1994. In Chapter X of the Programme of Action, governments are urged to (a) prevent situations of forced displacement from occurring by addressing their root causes; (b) identify and promote the implementation of durable solutions; (c) ensure effective refugee protection; (d) provide access to basic services, including health and education, to displaced populations, and (e) integrate refugees and returnee programmes in national development planning.

Twenty-one years after the adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action, the international community has made limited progress in preventing forced displacement and in identifying durable solutions. According to the latest available data, the number of refugees and IDPs has reached the highest levels since the Second World War, few forcibly displaced persons are able to return to their home communities, millions of refugees remain caught in situations of protracted displacement – the average duration of which is 17 years-, and the number of asylum applications in industrialized countries has surged.¹ Consequently, millions of refugees and IDPs are dependent on international humanitarian relief with limited prospects for self sufficiency. Moreover, few poverty reduction strategy papers and national development plans include assistance programmes for refugees or voluntarily returning refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In short, the objectives and actions in regard to refugees, asylum-seekers and

¹ United Nations (2014). Millennium Development Report 2014. New York; UNHCR (2014). Mid-Year Trends 2014. Geneva. UNHCR (2015). Asylum Trends, 2014. Geneva

displaced persons, as they were listed in Chapter X the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action, remain as relevant today as they were 21 years ago.²

Given today's limited implementation of durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons, and in view of the increasing number and duration of protracted situations there is growing need to promote self sufficiency and self reliance among displaced persons and to reduce their dependency on international aid while also strengthening the political commitment and capacity of governments to prevent and address forced displacement, including by providing durable solutions.

Research suggests that refugees contribute significantly to host societies. A report documenting the impact of over 700,000 refugees in Australia concluded that the intake of refugees "... can diversify and enhance the skill level of the population, increase economies of scale and foster innovation and flexibility."³ The review found that refugees brought needed skills, services and entrepreneurship to rural areas and that their remittances sustained communities in countries of origin. A report on the impact of refugees in host developing countries concluded that refugees bring needed skills, boosts the demand for local products and services, and attract remittances from abroad.⁴

As one of the initiatives seeking to leverage the contributions of refugees and displaced persons, the Solutions Alliance⁵ promotes transition for displaced persons away from dependency towards increased resilience, self-reliance and development. By bringing displacement into the sustainable development goals, targets and indicators, the post-2015 development agenda presents an opportunity to promote the understanding that displacement is not only a humanitarian and a protection issue, but also a development challenge. Governments and their development partners need to be involved from the onset of a crisis in tackling displacement and providing durable solutions. Addressing and preventing displacement can act as an enabler and enhancer for sustainable development. Including displacement in the post-2015 development agenda also raises the prospects of integrating refugees and displaced persons in national development planning, one of the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Although an earlier version of the proposal of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals included a target to reduce the number of refugees and IDPs, this target was not retained in the final outcome document. In line with the promise of the post-2015 development agenda to leave no one behind, a commitment echoed in the synthesis report of the Secretary-General⁶, efforts to include refugees and IDPs in the sustainable development goals should now focus on (a) formulating displacement related indicators, (b) disaggregating key targets for refugees, IDPs, and stateless persons, (c) ensuring that refugees, IDPs and stateless persons are included by definition among references to most vulnerable groups, and (d) including displacement related language in a political declaration that will accompany adoption of the agenda thereby ensuring that the forcibly displaced are understood to be fully included in the international community's new development agenda.

² In resolution 65/234, the General Assembly extended to the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014

³ Refugee Council of Australia (2010). Economic, civic and social contributions of refugees and humanitarian entrants.

⁴ World Bank (2010). The Impacts of Refugees on Neighboring Countries: A Development Challenge.

⁵ <http://www.endingdisplacement.org/>

⁶ A/69/700

Members of the Global Migration Group (GMG) have proposed to include the indicator "percentage of refugees and internally displaced persons who have found a durable solution".⁷ This indicator could potentially form part of the human mobility index, which has been proposed for target 10.7. and – as suggested by OCHA, UNHCR, IOM and the Special Rapporteur on the Human rights of IDPs – be linked to target 1.5 to measure the reduction of the vulnerability and building of resilience among refugees and IDPs. Other potential indicators could include the annual change in the number of refugees and IDPs, the number of countries offering resettlement slots, etc.⁸ To establish a link between disaster and displacement risk, an indicator measuring the number of people displaced by disasters should form part of target 1.5.

OWG targets which are essential for the well-being of refugees, stateless persons and IDPs include particularly those relating to ending discrimination, access to health, education, employment, water and sanitation, and legal identity.

The panel will address the following questions:

1. What initiatives can be taken to leverage the contribution of refugees, IDPs and returnees to the development of both host societies and countries of origin?
2. What are the experiences in integrating refugees, IDPs and returnees in national development planning, including poverty reduction strategies and UNDAFs?
3. How can we ensure that refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless and displaced persons are not excluded from the post-2015 development agenda? What strategy should be followed to achieve this?
4. How can national and regional capacities, institutions and frameworks be supported and leveraged to prevent forced displacement and address development?

⁷http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/13/documents/presentations/13CM_BELA_HOVY.pdf

⁸ <http://www.endingdisplacement.org/post-2015-common-messaging/>