

NGO Statement for the 2022 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges: Development Cooperation

This statement was drafted through a wide consultation with NGOs and reflects a diversity of views.

As we approach the end of the year, yet another tragic record has been broken, [over 100 million people](#) are forcibly displaced around the world. Nearly 40 percent of them are children and 74 percent are hosted in low-and middle-income countries. Conflict, violence, human rights violations, hunger, and climate change continue to drive displacement to unprecedented levels. [Incomes and livelihoods](#) are still decreasing as access to food, education, health services and access to asylum, safety and protection continues to be severely affected for people who are forcibly displaced.

With durable solutions still elusive, the topic of [this year's High Commissioner's Dialogue](#) addresses urgent issues. Enhancing cooperation between humanitarian and development actors is critical to respond to situations of forced displacement and statelessness more effectively across the globe. We welcome the seven regional preparatory roundtables convened by UNHCR in advance of the Dialogue this year, however, the inclusion of NGOs in all roundtables would have helped build the preparations and fulfil the expected outcomes of the Dialogue.

It is clear that only structural and durable solutions – not short-term fixes – can adequately address [the multiple and intersecting issues](#) that both cause and are exacerbated by forced displacement and statelessness. The global hunger crisis is just one urgent example of this interplay of factors. In East Africa, for example, [soaring food prices](#) come on top of drought and conflict. Around the world, [approximately 222 million people](#) across 53 countries are expected to face acute food insecurity by the end of 2022. 45 million people in 37 countries are projected to be at risk of starvation and death, and as food insecurity grows, so do secondary protection risks.

In this complex global context, we welcome UNHCR's commitment to mobilizing development actors and integrating development cooperation into humanitarian efforts to generate comprehensive and sustainable responses to create better solutions to forced displacement and statelessness. The 2023 Global Refugee Forum presents another opportunity for states, humanitarian, and development actors to mobilize resources and energy around this. To support that work, this statement will put forth recommendations to improve development cooperation in taking early action, inclusion of displaced people and the pursuit of durable solutions.

Enabling Early Action and Effective Responses

Since February, the response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and resulting large-scale displacement has shown how numerous and diverse actors can mobilize and work together in a relatively quick and coordinated manner especially when political will creates an enabling environment. Even as they deliver life-saving aid in the midst of an ongoing war, stakeholders are looking ahead to set Ukraine up for its ultimate [reconstruction and recovery](#). Although this has long been recognized as good practices in the face of potential protracted crises, it has not been consistently implemented. Innovative, blended financing, for example, has not been mobilized to respond to several other humanitarian crises. In some cases, just a single donor or a small pool of donors fund the vast majority of responses which weakens agility, scope, independence, and sustainability of interventions especially when assistance and protection

demands expand. In light of growing humanitarian needs worldwide, stakeholders should instead favor collective responses, and thus prioritize broadening the base of donors and financing tools available. We cannot wait for crises to unfold—we must anticipate needs; act early to prepare and respond; and remain flexible in response to constantly evolving situations, especially in fragile contexts.

We are encouraged by UNHCR’s efforts to deepen its relationship with development actors and international financial institutions recognizing that increasingly protracted situations of displacement cannot be addressed through humanitarian interventions alone. Development actors, including the World Bank, bilateral and multilateral development banks can play a significant role in addressing the many structural root causes of displacement, supporting disaster risk reduction, enabling early responses, ensuring predictable multi-year financing, and creating and adapting new financing instruments and partnerships to address some of the many and increasingly complex and intersecting challenges we are seeing at country, regional and global levels.

Humanitarian donors need also to recognize the limitations of still largely inflexible, risk averse, and administratively heavy short-term funding arrangements which fall short of the ambitions of the Grand Bargain. The call for predictable unearmarked multi-year funding as a tool for prompt anticipatory or early action, especially by local actors including women and youth-led organizations with access to frequently invisible displaced populations and their hosts, has never been louder though largely remains unheeded. As the importance of nexus-based approaches are also increasingly recognized as critical to sustainable and adaptable interventions in situations of protracted displacement, it is important to actively work towards removing bureaucratic donor-centric barriers within and between humanitarian, development, as well as peace actors. There is a particular opportunity to increase coherence between different institutional donor regulatory and accountability requirements including through better harmonizing and synchronizing donor portfolios, aligning project timeframes, and planning between shorter humanitarian funding cycles and longer-term development cooperation.

In the wake of COP 27 and growing attention to climate change as a direct and indirect driver of displacement, we must promote increased and transparent climate finance. The impacts of climate change are largescale and urgent support for mitigation and adaptation of affected and vulnerable communities experiencing more frequent, severe, and longer extreme weather-related events is necessary. We need an approach that prioritizes the most vulnerable and those at risk of being left furthest behind based on the principle of responsibility sharing and ensuring equitable funding allocation across the system.

Inclusion

Forcibly displaced and stateless people are often excluded from national systems and thus left unable to access goods and services to meet their needs, and struggle to access the rights to work, education, healthcare, legal documentation, and more. Barriers to inclusion can be greatest for certain identity groups that face compounded discrimination, for example based on age, gender, diversity, disability status, sexual orientation, and other factors. As head of the global protection architecture, UNHCR has a unique role to play in working across the nexus to ensure programing is coordinated to meet needs, especially of particularly marginalized groups, and that all actors meet minimum standards for protection.

UNHCR and partners should continue to highlight, support, recognize and welcome the achievements and challenges faced by host countries that have put in place some progressive policies that enable displaced

populations to be included into the national systems. Progress can be made through clear targets on inclusion, and a system that monitors progress through development cooperation. Issues such as legal documentation should be prioritized to enable displaced populations to access systems more easily.

International protection principles underscore the need for law and policy frameworks to enable the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in national structures. This is often the case for stateless people - the estimate of the total figure in the world to be at least [15 million stateless](#) – statelessness being a cause and consequence of displacement and its intersection with discrimination based on race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and other grounds. One of the biggest challenges for communities that have been stateless for many generations is that they are increasingly ‘left further behind’ with each new generation.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement stress the need for national level responsibility in protection and assistance of displaced and stateless persons. This requires national level legislation, policy frameworks, and strategic plans that accommodate the participation, voice, and leadership of displaced and stateless people without distinction – if it is not inclusive, it is not local.

We welcome development actors’ efforts to promote the inclusion of displaced and stateless people in their programming by setting up specialized financial mechanisms, such as the World Bank’s IDA Window for Host Communities and Refugees and the Global Concessional Financing Facility. Further scaling up and diversification of such efforts (the UN Secretary General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement highlights opportunities to also work with the Private Sector) is required. National and local authorities as well as development, humanitarian and peace actors need to scale up such efforts. Better data collection and analysis as well as sharing of good practice is required to identify concrete obstacles to meaningful inclusive participation and ensure better outcomes for displaced and stateless persons.

Financial support is also critical to empower affected communities’ efforts to address their own needs. But local actors¹ often struggle to secure quality, long-term, direct funding for their programmes. [Strengthening equitable partnerships](#) and ensuring affected communities have a central role in forced displacement responses will yield better humanitarian and development outcomes. Greater efforts must be taken to ensure that development approaches are effectively rooted into local systems, expertise, and capacities. Initiatives led by displaced and stateless people and host communities, including children and youth, must be prioritized. We urge all actors to ensure displacement responses and efforts to address statelessness are aligned with the localization agenda which encourages greater inclusion of ownership by, and resourcing to local actors.

Solutions

“Durable solutions” enable displaced people to rebuild their lives through safe, dignified voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement. But about 74 percent of people displaced globally are in [protracted situations](#) and very few can access such durable solutions. Improving development cooperation can help scale up solutions by building the capacity of national and regional systems to provide protection and support to displaced and stateless people.

¹ With regards to the inclusion of local actors in societal structure, in decision-making, and of displaced populations and host communities in aid implementation, see also [the collective NGO statement on The preparations for the High Commissioner's Dialogue](#) delivered at UNHCR 85th Standing Committee in September 2022.

Voluntary return is only one of the three durable solutions available to displaced communities. Governments should also equally consider resettlement and local integration as viable options to support displaced people. When voluntary return is pursued, it must be safe, and dignified and reintegration should be supported.

Several good initiatives already in place to promote local integration could be expanded, replicated, and enhanced with more investment and technical and capacity support. Development partners and host governments should heavily invest in realizing the full self-reliance of displaced and host communities. Self-reliance is a desirable goal for local integration and can also support displaced communities who are seeking to return to their country of origin. In addition, countering discrimination between displaced communities and host communities through joint activities and programs as well as highlighting some of the efforts and contributions of displaced communities can help reduce tensions and promote social cohesion. [Working with cities and municipalities](#) to ensure coherence between a city's long-term development goals and humanitarian interventions to effectively find solutions for urban displaced populations, have also been effective.

Meanwhile, global resettlement targets remain extremely low. A range of actors, including development actors, must come together to undertake coordinated strategic initiatives to support access to resettlement and demonstrate solidarity with displaced people and host communities. Renewed efforts are required to ensure progress on expanding displaced people's access to all solutions.

Regarding durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs), we call on UNHCR to advocate for development cooperation actors, notably bilateral donors, and international financial institutions, to put in place measures to address internal displacement proactively and systematically in their financing mechanisms.

Development donors should ensure that the promotion of durable solutions for IDPs as well as host communities, are integrated into strategies, programs, and funding aimed at reducing fragility, as long-term internal displacement without sustainable solutions has an impact on the development and stability of societies and states. Support should be prioritized for concerned states, as well as civil society organizations working to operationalize durable solutions in the field.

To conclude, we welcome this opportunity to contribute to this Dialogue on development cooperation and commend UNHCR for its continued service to forcibly displaced and stateless people.