

Is return always a **durable** solution?

Examining the **relevance**, **reality**
and **durability** of voluntary
repatriation in 2025



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Executive Summary

With over 122 million people forcibly displaced worldwide and protracted crises lasting nearly two decades on average, durable solutions are needed more than ever. Voluntary return remains one of the three UNHCR-recognised durable solutions, alongside local integration and resettlement. While often framed as the “preferred solution,” voluntary repatriation is frequently hindered by insecurity, lack of legal protections, and inadequate reintegration support.

This report captures the key insights from the ICVA webinar “Is Return Always a Durable Solution?” held in July 2025, which explored the relevance, realities, and sustainability of voluntary repatriation in the context of today’s forced displacement.

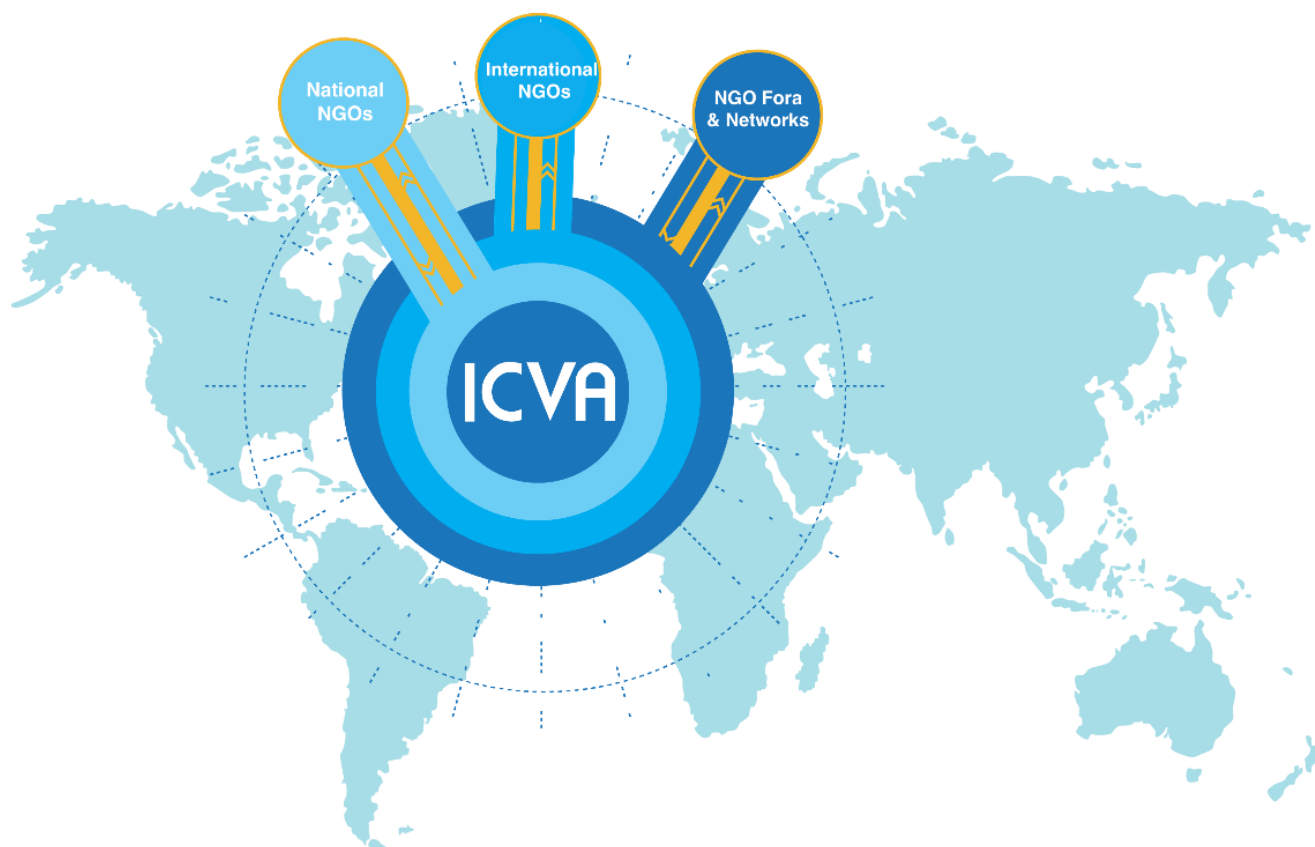
Key themes and insights

- **UNHCR’s role** in voluntary return has expanded from organising returns to also supporting reintegration, monitoring conditions, and ensuring that protection standards are met.
- **For stateless people**, returning without citizenship or legal identity cannot be considered a durable solution.
- **Regional perspectives:**
 - *Horn of Africa*: many returns are driven by political and economic pressures rather than genuine choice, often leading to people moving back and forth.
 - *South Sudan*: many people return because of survival needs rather than informed voluntary decision-making, which makes community-led reintegration crucial.
 - *Syria*: refugee-led and local organisations are providing essential services and filling governance gaps despite insecurity and limited funding.
- **Across all contexts**, insecurity, lack of livelihoods, environmental risks, and social exclusion undermine the sustainability of return.
- **Good practices** include involving communities in planning, ensuring people have legal documents, providing access to housing and land, and linking reintegration efforts to national development plans.

Recommendations emerging from the discussion

- Uphold voluntariness, safety, dignity, and informed choice in all returns.
- Maintain local integration and resettlement as real alternatives to return.
- Resolve legal identity and citizenship issues before encouraging return.
- Strengthen collaboration between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors.
- Support community leadership and ensure programmes are flexible and well resourced.

Voluntary repatriation can only be a durable solution when it is safe, rights-based, and supports long-term reintegration.



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Special thanks go to **Davina Saïd**, ICVA Head of Forced Displacement, for moderating the discussion and providing overall guidance. We also acknowledge **Keya Saha-Chaudhury**, ICVA Regional Representative, for her leadership and closing remarks, and for helping to shape the conversation.

We are grateful to our expert panellists for their valuable insights:

- **Katherine Harris**, Senior Durable Solutions Officer, UNHCR Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)
- **Campbell Macknight**, Senior Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Officer, UNHCR

About ICVA

ICVA is a global network of 185 non-governmental organisations whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.

- **Subin Mulmi**, Executive Director, Nationality for All (NFA)
- **Patience Kiara Gakii**, Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS)
- **Scarlett Hawkins**, Protection from Violence Specialist and Protection Cluster Co-Coordinator, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- **Mustafa Alio**, Co-Managing Director, Refugees Seeking Equal Access to the Table (R-SEAT)

We also thank **Jeff Crisp**, Research Associate at the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, and Associate Fellow at Chatham House, for his additional remarks.

The drafting of this document was undertaken by **Issie Basile & Nathan Boulaz**, with valuable feedback from ICVA colleagues and participating organisations.



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Introduction

Voluntary repatriation refers to a situation in which refugees can return in safety and dignity to their country of origin and benefit from national protection. Voluntary return, or voluntary repatriation, is one of the three [UNHCR recognised durable solutions](#) alongside local integration (in which refugees legally, economically and socially integrate in their host country, benefiting from the national protection provided by the host government) and resettlement (involving the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status).

It is increasingly the norm – though one we should not simply accept – for refugee situations to become protracted, placing far too great a burden and responsibility on refugee hosting countries and highlighting that voluntary repatriation is too rare. Although registered voluntary returns increased slightly between 2021 and 2022, in 2023 statistics reverted to the low levels of the past decade. However, we are beginning to see a rise in numbers in 2025 mainly due to the context of Syria where 850,000 refugees have returned home. Nonetheless,

most refugees across the world continue to face overwhelming obstacles when considering a return to their home country due to ongoing persecution risks, continued conflicts, as well as political, social, and environmental instability. The pursuit of this specific durable solution must be linked to the principle of voluntariness, which is fundamental to ensuring long-term success. Conditions in the country of return must also be conducive to ensure the durability of the solution, including the provision of protection.

Discourse has often repeated that voluntary return is ‘the preferred durable solution’ but this may not reflect the complexity of refugees’ aspirations and may undercut political will for other solutions.

Moderated by ICVA Head of Forced Displacement, Davina Saïd, this webinar brought together an expert panel to:

1. Unpack the origin of return as a durable solution and its relevance today,
2. Reflect on voluntary return – rhetoric or reality for stateless populations,
3. Assess the durability of voluntary return in practice: case study examples.

Opening remarks:

Keya Saha-Chaudhury - ICVA Regional Representative for Asia Pacific

“The urgency for this webinar stems from rising global needs, shrinking resources, and a retreat from multilateralism, all of which are acutely impacting refugee responses. Funding cuts and shifting political landscapes — particularly in countries like the U.S. — have left many displaced people in limbo. With over 122 million people forcibly displaced and the average duration of displacement nearing two decades, it’s essential that all durable solutions as well as complementary pathways are explored.

ICVA is beginning this series looking at durable solutions by focusing on voluntary repatriation — a solution often promoted, yet deeply complex and context-dependent. Today’s discussion will unpack its origins, assess its current relevance, and explore its implementation across diverse settings and populations, including stateless communities.

While voluntary repatriation may be the most hoped for solution for many refugees, its success hinges on safety, voluntariness, and access to rights and livelihoods. Yet, we are witnessing rising instances of forced or pressured returns, including the mass deportation of Afghan nationals from Iran and Pakistan — over 1.9 million in 2025 alone — into dire conditions. At the same time, some refugees are voluntarily returning to places like Syria and South Sudan, though the durability of these returns remains uncertain. For Rohingya communities, the promise of return has remained elusive for decades. In all contexts, humanitarian actors and displaced people are on the front line — navigating the tension between aspiration and reality and advocating for truly lasting solutions that go beyond return alone.”



How does UNHCR define voluntary repatriation as a durable solution, and how has it evolved over time?

Expert panellist: Katherine Harris, Senior Durable Solutions Officer, UNHCR Bureau for MENA



Voluntary repatriation (VolRep) is one of three traditional durable solutions for refugees - alongside local integration and resettlement. It refers to the free and informed return of refugees to their country of origin in safety and dignity. While conceptually simple, the reality of implementing VolRep is far more complex, as it is influenced by political, financial, and contextual dynamics.

The UNHCR's role in VolRep has evolved significantly over time. Initially, once refugees crossed back into their country, UNHCR's responsibility ended. Today, the agency plays a broader role — facilitating, monitoring, and supporting reintegration to ensure returns are truly durable. This shift reflects the recognition that return alone does not guarantee safety or sustainability.

UNHCR's approach is grounded in legal and policy frameworks including the 1950 UNHCR Statute, the 1951 Refugee Convention, and multiple Executive Committee Conclusions — particularly Conclusion No.117 (2024). This conclusion reinforces operational changes that include:

- Ensuring voluntariness, safety, and dignity of return,
- Supporting conducive conditions for return (legal, physical, and material safety),
- Promoting rights-based reintegration, and
- Strengthening post-return monitoring and accountability.

Despite these principles, real-world practice often challenges the notion of truly voluntary return. Refugees may face external pressures — from host governments intent on reducing refugee populations, origin countries eager to mark conflict as resolved, or donors keen to reduce aid costs. In such cases, the line between

voluntary and forced return can blur, threatening the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Refugee repatriation decision-making is rarely binary; choices are often made in constrained environments marked by push and pull factors. A [2022 evaluation of UNHCR's return and reintegration work](#) found that many of its traditional support models lacked the flexibility to respond to diverse and evolving needs. It recommended greater responsiveness to refugee agency and less reliance on standardised approaches.

UNHCR continues to advocate for genuinely voluntary returns, providing counselling and working with host countries to uphold protection standards. Importantly, it maintains that VolRep should not be seen as the only solution — resettlement and local integration must also remain viable options for those unable or unwilling to return.

Ultimately, placing refugee agency at the centre of decision-making — and adapting approaches as contexts shift — is critical to upholding both protection standards and the legitimacy of durable solutions.

Additional Resources

- [The 1950 UNHCR Statute](#)
- [The 1951 Refugee Convention](#)
- [Executive Committee Conclusion No.40 in 1985](#)
- [Executive Committee Conclusion No.117 on durable solutions and complementary pathways](#)
- [Safe and Voluntary Refugee Repatriation: From Principle to Practice \(Crisp & Long, 2016\) | Article in the Journal on Migration and Human Security](#)

What role does UNHCR have in voluntary repatriation? What are the challenges and successes?

Expert panellist: Campbell Macknight, Senior Resettlement & Complementary Pathways Officer, UNHCR Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa, and Great Lakes Region (EHAGL)



Voluntary repatriation in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region is guided by both international refugee law and by regional instruments such as the [1969 OAU Convention](#). This regional convention codifies the principle of voluntary return and assigns responsibilities to both countries of asylum and countries of origin.

Successful repatriation efforts often rely on **tripartite agreements** and/or letters of understanding between Governments involving UNHCR, the country of asylum/host country, and the country of origin. These agreements and/or letters help ensure clear expectations, shared responsibilities, and legal assurances for returnees.

Some of the most effective examples of VolRep have been shaped by **refugee-hosting states with leadership that includes former refugees**, such as in Rwanda and South Sudan. Their lived experience has contributed to progressive refugee policies.

However, voluntary return is **not suitable for all refugees**. Return decisions must consider family unity, protection risks (e.g. for LGBTQI+ persons), and the best interests of children. Comprehensive solutions must always be available for those who cannot or do not wish to return.

Key components of a rights-based repatriation include:

- **Safety and dignity:** Refugees must return free from violence, persecution, or discrimination.
- **Informed decision-making:** Community engagement through participatory approaches and information-sharing is essential.

- **Documentation:** Refugees must return with valid identification and credentials to access rights and services in their country.
- **Legal protection:** Guarantees against discrimination due to ethnicity, religion, or prior refugee status are critical.
- **Data protection:** Personal data must be managed responsibly and confidentially by all actors involved.

Sustainability is another core concern. Returns must be supported by:

- Access to **livelihoods, education, health care, and housing**.
- **Restitution or compensation** for lost property, enabled by documentation and legal frameworks.
- **Inclusion in national development plans** and collaboration with partners like UNDP, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank to promote long-term reintegration.

However, **unsustainable returns** are still a challenge. Refugees sometimes return only to be internally displaced again or to re-seek asylum elsewhere, causing instability. Constraints such as **inadequate funding**, both for development and for individual returnees (e.g. cash grants to cover immediate needs) undermine the durability of returns.

Finally, **climate-related challenges** (e.g. droughts, floods) are increasingly significant barriers to return, as seen in Burundi, South Sudan, and Somalia, compounding issues of security and reintegration. Addressing these requires flexible, well-resourced, and context-sensitive approaches.

What does durable, voluntary repatriation mean when the refugees are stateless or denied citizenship?

How should actors approach returns in situations where fundamental protections remain unfulfilled?



Expert panellist: Subin Mulmi, Executive Director, Nationality for All (NFA)

Statelessness and refugeehood often intersect, but they are distinct. While refugee status involves displacement, statelessness is fundamentally about *exclusion and the denial of legal identity*, which is essential for accessing rights, protection, and belonging.

For many stateless populations — especially those *in situ* — the concept of “return” is irrelevant, as they have never left their country of birth. Applying standard durable solutions like voluntary return in these contexts often misses the mark.

In cases where statelessness and displacement overlap — such as with the Rohingya in Myanmar or stateless Afghans born in exile — voluntary return becomes part of policy discourse. However, **return without guarantees of citizenship, documentation, and rights is not a durable solution**. It risks perpetuating exclusion rather than resolving it.

Several examples illustrate these dynamics:

- The Rohingya face repeated repatriation efforts without safety, legal recognition, or rights in Myanmar.
- Stateless Afghans in Iran and Pakistan are pressured to return to a country where they lack documentation and civil recognition.
- The *Bajau* community in Southeast Asia, historically stateless due to their nomadic lifestyle, seek documentation in countries like Indonesia and the Philippines — not as a “return” but as a move toward protection.

- In Nepal, gender-discriminatory nationality laws prevent children born to Nepali mothers and foreign fathers from acquiring citizenship. For these children, durable solutions lie in legal reform, not physical return.
- The *Dom* community in Lebanon, despite court rulings granting legal status, still faces systemic discrimination, showing that **legal recognition alone is insufficient** without practical implementation.

It is essential to reframe how voluntary return is understood for stateless people. **Return must be legally meaningful**, not just physically possible. It must come with recognition, rights, and the dismantling of exclusionary systems. Otherwise, it is not a solution—it is abandonment.

Key actions include:

1. **Do no harm** — Avoid promoting return without secure legal identity.
2. **Push for legal reform** — Tackle discriminatory nationality laws and broken civil registration systems.
3. **Ensure documentation** — Before and after return, legal identity must be guaranteed.
4. **Elevate stateless voices** — Inclusion in planning and decision-making is essential.

Ultimately, durable solutions for stateless persons must be shaped by justice, rights, and agency — not by rigid frameworks or timelines. Solutions should be defined *with* stateless communities, not imposed *on* them.



Return must be legally meaningful, not just physically possible. It must come with recognition, rights, and the dismantling of exclusionary systems. Otherwise, it is not a solution — it is abandonment.

Subin Mulmi, Executive Director,
Nationality for All (NFA)



Additional Resources

- [Statelessness Encyclopaedia Asia Pacific Report](#)
- [SEAP Website](#)

East and the Horn of Africa Region: How is the durability of voluntary repatriation assessed in the Region?

What national policies and practices are either promoting or hindering this durability?



Expert panellist: Patience Kiara Gakii, Director, Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS)

Rethinking Return

Governments and policy frameworks in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region generally emphasise voluntary repatriation as the preferred durable solution. National-level policies and regional frameworks provide the formal basis for returns. These include:

- [IGAD Nairobi Declaration](#), [IGAD Protection Policy](#),
- [2019 Kampala Declaration on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-Reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Hosts](#), and
- OAU Refugee Convention

However, in practice, return is often treated as the default option rather than upheld as a voluntary, rights-based choice.

Return is being driven by **shrinking aid budgets, containment policies, and political interests**. Regional and national policy frameworks point to this reality. Moreover, even in progressive **refugee** policy contexts, for example in Uganda, citizenship pathways are not always an option, and returns are still preferred.

Refugees are increasingly resorting to **precarious, adaptive strategies** outside formal systems. Moreover, return can never be a durable solution without conditions for reintegration.

There is a need to shift to **context-specific, dynamic approaches** centred on refugee perspectives. For example, do we need Quadripartite instead of Tripartite Return Agreements?

Key Lessons for Sustainable Return

1. Broaden “returnee” definitions to protect all those who need support - documented and undocumented.
2. Ensure the dissemination of timely, accurate information to support informed decisions – whilst also understanding and using community networks to disseminate, which are often more trusted than formal information systems.
3. The quality of asylum often determines the quality of return.
4. Regional agreements for responsibility-sharing and accountability should be utilised.
5. Design cross-border approaches which must be adaptable to mobility realities in the region.
6. Prioritise access to housing, land, and property, along with associated rights.
7. Invest in urban/community planning in anticipation of arrivals. Focus on early solutions thinking, understanding the diverse profiles and skills that will be arriving.
8. Enable locally led, market-linked economic reintegration.
9. Monitor and adapt programmes with data and feedback.
10. Programming and policy makers need to listen better to communities and include them in all aspects of programme design. Agreements must centre around community inclusion and there should be a focus on practical realities, not frameworks alone.

Case example 1: Somalia-Kenya

“The Reality of Circular Returns”

There are over 140,000 Somalis who have returned under the Voluntary Return Programme (VRP) since 2014; and others have returned ‘spontaneously.’ However, many go back to Kenya — not only due to a failure of reintegration but also as a coping and survival strategy. Related context and dynamics include:

- ❑ Returnees are often concentrated in **urban centres (Kismayo, Mogadishu), worsening stretched conditions, where there are limited absorption capacities.**
- ❑ Among reintegration challenges are insecurity, limited livelihoods, clan dynamics seeing ‘returnees as outsiders’ or as ‘Internally Displaced Persons’ — which in Somalia is linked to low social and political capital.
- ❑ **Circular returns are sometimes a survival strategy** amid uncertainty and exclusion.
- ❑ Reintegration planning and programming is needed **before and after returns.** Relatedly, we need to think about how to plan and coordinate around return processes — including matching programmes, better coordination and communications, funding cross-border initiatives, strengthening referral mechanisms, etc.

Case example 2: Burundi

“Cautious Optimism”

There have been more than 220,000 returns since 2017 under the **national reintegration strategy.**

- ❑ Persistent challenges exist including **fragmented implementation, limited funding, and a strain on services.**
- ❑ A hesitancy to return is linked to a lack of **trust, and gaps in services and opportunities.**
- ❑ There is a need to align **area-based local governance with reintegration objectives.**
- ❑ Reintegration barriers are often linked to **development challenges.**
- ❑ A question remains around how we close the monitoring and data gaps.

South Sudan: What are the current conditions for 'returnees' and host communities?

Where should limited resources be directed to build in the conditions towards recovery?

Expert panellist: Scarlett Hawkins, Protection from Violence Specialist — Protection Cluster Co-Coordinator, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)



Over 3 million South Sudanese have officially returned, many from Sudan. Yet, many returnees cannot make the legal transition necessary from refugee in a neighbouring country to a returnee in South Sudan. Displacement can also be cyclical, with repeated cross border movements occurring. Though South Sudan is their country of nationality, many have not lived there for years — or ever. The decisions to return are often based on survival amid war, are not always informed, and may neither be dignified nor voluntary.

Voluntary Return: A Misnomer

Voluntary return assumes returnees choose to go home with adequate information, yet many are not given the facts necessary to make informed decisions:

- A [2025 UNHCR intentions survey](#) found **73% of South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries had no intention to return** in the next 12 months.
- For many returnees from Sudan, the decision is not autonomous, but a **forced calculation between danger and death**.

Durable Solutions: A Matter of Integration

NRC defines durable solutions as achieved when people **no longer face displacement-related needs or protection risks**. Return is not a durable solution if individuals **cannot integrate**, access rights, or live without discrimination.

Protection Risks

South Sudanese in Sudan face persecution by armed actors, including arbitrary detention, forced deportation, and physical abuse. NRC reports returnees arriving with **bullet wounds, trauma, and urgent psychosocial needs**. Overland return journeys are perilous, often involving **extortion, debt traps, and forced labour or exploitation** upon arrival.

Community-Centred Reintegration

Returns must be coupled with **sustainable, principled reintegration**. Humanitarian actors must:

- Listen to returnees' own needs.
- Recognise that people often choose **informal settlements** near borders due to social networks, not areas of origin.
- Prioritise **community-driven action plans**, as in NRC's durable solution pilot in Northern *Bahr el-Ghazal*.



Returns to South Sudan are often not voluntary, safe, or dignified — but reintegration can be.

Scarlett Hawkins,
NRC Protection from Violence Specialist



Conflict Sensitivity & Targeting

Humanitarian aid must be conflict sensitive. **Narrow targeting based solely on displacement status** can lead to exclusion, resentment, and tension. NRC uses **risk-based targeting**, accounting for **age, gender, disability, and protection risks**, to better respond to diverse needs.

Triple Nexus & System Strengthening

South Sudan has an enabling policy framework, but **humanitarian efforts must be linked to development and peacebuilding**.

Funding must support both immediate humanitarian needs, and long-term development to build local systems and absorb returnees.

Humanitarians must collaborate with **local authorities and development actors** to create the conditions for self-reliance and inclusion.

Final Takeaway

Returns to South Sudan are often not voluntary, safe, or dignified—but reintegration can be. The

focus must shift to **ensuring reintegration is sustainable, inclusive, and community-driven**, while working with the government as the primary duty-bearer.

Syria: What is the role of RLOs, and local and national actors since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024? What are the challenges and opportunities?

Expert panellist: Mustafa Alio, Co-Managing Director, Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT)



Nearly 2 million Syrians have returned home despite Syria's fragile infrastructure and volatile political climate. While large-scale reconstruction remains elusive, we are witnessing a notable shift: refugee-led, diaspora, and local organisations are filling critical governance and service delivery gaps.

Local & Refugee-Led Actors: Filling the Void

In the face of collapsed institutions and renewed violence, these groups have stepped up:

- **Some refugee-led organisations already had operations inside Syria**, while others transitioned from neighbouring countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey) into Syria within weeks of the front-line shifts.
- They bring with them community trust, operational agility, and grounded needs assessments — **proximity and legitimacy that international actors often lack**.
- These organisations are delivering health, education, humanitarian aid, and infrastructure support, often **assuming quasi-governmental roles** in the absence of state capacity.

De Facto Governance and Crisis Response

A prime example of this is the **White Helmets**, which have become Syria's *de facto* national emergency response agency. Their evolution from refugee-led to nationally embedded underscores how **civil society can fill state functions**, particularly in fragmented or contested areas.

Power of Diaspora Networks

With 7 million Syrians abroad and 6 million displaced internally, diaspora-led NGOs have emerged as **bridges between Syria and the international community**. Many of these groups, formed in exile, now return with **language skills, global advocacy networks, and technical expertise**, uniquely positioning them to support post-conflict rebuilding.

“ Syria’s civil society, particularly refugee-led and local actors, are not just filling gaps; they’re redefining what recovery and governance can look like. Any future policy or funding model must **centre these actors** and avoid side-lining them in the name of expediency.

Mustafa Alio, R-SEAT

Transitional Justice & Accountability

- Local and refugee-led organisations play a **central role in truth-telling, documentation, and peacebuilding**.
- Deep community roots allow RLOs to lead difficult conversations around accountability and justice — something the government is neither trusted nor equipped to do.
- RLO credibility was recently reaffirmed in responses to crises like the **wildfires in Latakia**, where they mobilised quickly and effectively.

Challenges Ahead

1. **Fragmented authority and insecurity** make coordination and program delivery complex.
2. **Funding constraints and operational barriers** like damaged infrastructure and politicised aid limit response reach.
3. **Polarisation and mistrust** persist, especially where organisations are perceived as politically aligned.
4. There is **growing pressure to accelerate refugee returns** — often driven by external actors prioritising numbers over safe, voluntary, and dignified processes.

Additional Remarks

Jeff Crisp – Research Associate at the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, and an Associate Fellow at Chatham House

1. While the principles of voluntary repatriation are clear (except for the notion of 'dignity', which has never been properly defined) the practice is often “quite messy”. On numerous occasions UNHCR has become involved in return operations that are not voluntary in the true sense, but the organisation has “never been open and honest about this”. If UNHCR felt that it had no option but to become involved in involuntary repatriation, then it should be honest about it and explain the rationale for its involvement.
2. Assessing voluntariness can be a tricky business. The [UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Handbook](#) talks about voluntariness being an absence of direct pressures to return, but in many cases the pressures are indirect. For example, refugees are often obliged to accumulate debt to survive, and they are consequently prone to accept an offer to repatriate when UNHCR offers them money to do so. In the case of Somalis in Kenya, some refugees used all their cash grant to repay their debts and then had no resources to fall back on once they repatriated. And having taken the cash grant, they were not able to return to Kenya and claim assistance.
3. Tripartite Commissions and Agreements often take decision-making on return “out of the hands of refugees and into the hands of States and UNHCR”. In an article, [Katy Long and Jeff Crisp](#) argue for the establishment of Quadripartite Commissions, which guarantee structured refugee and RLO representation.
4. UNHCR was right to say that traditionally (until the 1990s) it was involved in transporting refugees home, but it did not

really become involved in the reintegration process (as one Deputy High Commissioner said, “all we give them is a cooking pot and a handshake”). When UNHCR started to become involved in reintegration, the expectation was that this would be in a limited way and for a short period, as development actors would step in and deal with the longer-term dimensions of the process. This has not happened, and UNHCR has found itself undertaking activities (e.g. hospital construction) outside its mandate.

5. In refugee situations where the [Cessation Clause](#) is applied, there is usually an expectation that the people concerned will repatriate (unless they can regularise their status in their country of asylum). The process of invoking the Cessation Clause has always been opaque. It is often unclear who has taken the decision, on what basis it has been made, and what process should be used to determine the future of refugees who are unwilling to repatriate.

Additional Resources

- [Discussion Note on the Application of the "ceased circumstances" Cessation Clauses in the 1951 Convention](#)
- [Cessation of Refugee Protection](#) (J. Fitzpatrick & R. Bonoan, 2003)
- [Case study: The Comprehensive Solutions Strategy for the situation of Ivorian refugees including UNHCR's recommendations on the applicability of the cessation clauses](#)

Acronyms & Abbreviations

AfDB	African Development Bank
DS	Durable Solutions
EA+GL	East Africa and Great Lakes
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NFA	Nationality for All
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
RLO	Refugee-Led Organisation
R-SEAT	Refugees Seeking Equal Access to the Table
ReDSS	Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat
SEAP	Statelessness Encyclopaedia Asia Pacific
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VRP	Voluntary Repatriation Programme



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