
“Towards a global compact on refugees”

Thematic discussion four: Measures to be taken in the pursuit of solutions

14 November 2017

Panel three: How can we expand access to complementary pathways for admission?

Summary

This panel focused on a variety of pathways to solutions for refugees that *complement* and do not substitute traditional pathways for refugees, such as resettlement. Participants described these pathways as critical and targeted tools that States can use to show solidarity, share responsibility for refugees, and unlock the potential for more durable solutions down the line.

Participants called for the programme of action to enhance access to all complementary pathways suggested in the concept note, notably family reunification, educational or training opportunities, labour migration schemes, sponsorship programs and humanitarian visas or admission schemes. In particular, it was suggested that these pathways cater to both the changing realities and needs of refugees and their families, as well as to the needs of host States and their communities. Several participants emphasized the manner in which some complementary pathways can build on each other, such as the manner in which community sponsorship can support family reunification or in which a student visa can be replaced by a work permit after the completion of studies.

The panel also emphasised the positive local impacts of complementary pathways such as private and community sponsorship, which can bring host communities and refugees closer together and foster social cohesion within host States. The importance of ensuring that these pathways contain the safeguards that refugees need was also stressed.

Recommendations for expanding access to complementary pathways

1. On enhanced family reunification for refugees with family links in third countries
 - Expand eligibility criteria to wider members of the family unit in national family reunification schemes.
 - Increase the age of dependents who may be eligible to join refugee family members.
2. On creating educational opportunities such as scholarship, apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities
 - Ensure that educational scholarships for refugees fund not only tuition fees, but also travel and living costs, and further enable recipients to bring their families with them.
3. On facilitating labour migration schemes in a protection sensitive manner
 - Ensure that labour mobility schemes for refugees not only prioritise highly skilled refugees, but invite a mixture of skill sets and levels.
 - Ensure refugee access to gender sensitive training, apprenticeships and work opportunities.

- Create incentives for employers to recruit refugees by, for example, requiring specific quotas, lowering hiring costs for employers or providing specific corporate social responsibility grants.
4. On increasing private or community sponsorship programmes for refugees that are complementary or additional to regular resettlement
- Empower citizens to become part of refugee solutions, including by participating in the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GSRI). The GSRI has supported new community sponsorships programs tailored to national contexts in Argentina, Ireland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to date and is currently involved in 16 other States.

On facilitating the ability of refugees to take up complementary pathways for admission in a protection sensitive manner, participants spoke to the need to:

- streamline, simplify and remove obstacles to speedy family reunification – which can further deter persons from otherwise seeking to join family members through dangerous and irregular routes;
- ensure that labour mobility schemes for refugees include protections against *refoulement* and, depending on the case, provisions for readmission to countries of first asylum on completion;
- ensure that refugees who enter labour markets benefit from the same recruitment and labour standards that nationals receive – including protection against labour exploitation;
- ensure linkages between complementary pathways and durable solutions; and
- include stateless persons in complementary pathways. Provision of travel documents can make an enormous difference in supporting the lives of stateless refugees.

Additional suggestions for the programme of action

- That complementary pathways consider cross-border child protection needs.
- That complementary pathways must be available both to men *and* women.
- That complementary pathways include the possibility of lifting visa requirements in certain situations.
- That complementary pathways involve refugee community perspectives to see which types of programs are constructive and do work.
- That complementary pathways are constantly measured, monitored and built upon where successful.

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