
“Towards a global compact on refugees”

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

14 November 2017

Panel four: How can we make local solutions work for refugees and the communities in which they live?

Summary

Some key considerations in terms of local solutions included the following:

- There is no “one size fits all” approach for local solutions and the local and national context should be taken into account.
- Local integration can form part of a comprehensive approach (or “package”) to solutions, where appropriate, in addition to voluntary repatriation and third country solutions. It is important to approach solutions thoughtfully from the outset of a refugee emergency.
- It is essential to address the needs of both refugees and local communities alike in any local solution.
- Support for local solutions requires a wide coalition of humanitarian and development actors, financial institutions, civil society, regional bodies, youth groups, and other relevant stakeholders. Addressing the needs of women and girl refugees and empowering them as decision-makers is particularly important.
- Sustained high level political will and leadership is crucial.

Suggestions for the programme of action

From the concept note

Generally, the proposals in the concept paper were welcomed and echoed in the statements made. These included the following.

1. Development and other financial assistance
 - Ensuring adequate and predictable financial support for local solutions is a key challenge, including by front-loading funding where possible. There was a call for more concrete and sustainable measures for funding and resource allocation to be identified.
 - It is important that resources for local solutions be additional to, not divert from, existing commitments. The goal is to ensure that providing local solutions does not create burdens on affected countries.
2. Inclusive policies
 - The local context will determine which policies and frameworks are needed to support an inclusive approach.

- “No one left behind” – local solutions provide an important opportunity to address the rights and needs of people in vulnerable situations especially those with disabilities and ageing people. The charter on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action provides a good basis. Disaggregated data is key.
3. Ensure benefits to refugees and host communities alike
 - It is crucial to ensure that dividends from local solutions benefit both local populations and refugees. For example, developing infrastructure that all groups can use such as water supply and health facilities, can foster peaceful coexistence.
 - A compact between refugees and local communities could be encouraged to ensure “two-way commitment”; strong local leadership and local “champions” can also promote successful local solutions, and ensure that local communities are heard and have a voice.
 - Support is needed for governments not just in developing policies but in communicating them.
 4. Developing or updating national and local development plans to include refugees
 - Sustained support from development partners and other actors is needed in order to supplement national development efforts in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustainable development goals. The importance of local authorities was particularly emphasized.
 - The experience in Zambia shows the importance of sustainable livelihoods for former refugees; and the advantages of inclusion of former refugees in national and local development plans and programmes (such as land allocation).
 5. Analyse the economies in refugee hosting areas and ensure access to livelihoods for all
 - There can be mutual benefits for former refugees and local communities if those benefiting from local solutions are capacitated to contribute to local economies and are catalysts and agents of development. Recognition and mapping of refugees’ existing skills and capacities is also needed, including those of women and girls.
 - A social impact bond approach to employment and training – channelling private investment into projects with public ends – provides a good public/private sector partnerships model.
 - Where local people see former refugees contributing to the economy this can generate acceptance. An online platform for trading goods established by refugees in Turkey was cited as an example.
 6. Tolerance and social harmony, and addressing xenophobia
 - Providing information on what xenophobia is, and ensuring that citizens in day-to-day interactions understand relevant laws and policies is key to the workability of local solutions.
 - Enabling the learning of local languages for refugees can also foster inclusion.
 - Dedicated programmes to communicate investments in refugee hosting areas and the long-term benefits of including refugees were recommended.
 7. Legal local integration of refugees
 - Legal frameworks may need to be adjusted to set out criteria for local integration; flexible frameworks are needed for integration to be successful, including with respect to access to national passports.

- A number of good examples of legal frameworks that ensure fundamental rights are respected were cited, including those related to access to health care, education, shelter and housing, social protection, freedom of movement and other rights.

Additional suggestions for the programme of action

- Coordination platforms to facilitate high-level dialogue on local solutions, including local civil society organizations.
- Multi-year commitments to help host governments make necessary reforms to support local solutions, including in terms of access to education.
- Preferential trade arrangements for goods produced by refugees in host States.
- Working groups involving representatives from refugee and local communities to lead and advise on the integration process.
- A coordinated dialogue process at the onset of refugee situations, including host countries, regional institutions, donors, and other actors to support the revision and development of relevant policies and frameworks; as well as intersectional gender-sensitive needs and capacity assessments at the onset of crises.
- Inclusion of internally displaced people in local solutions programming where appropriate.
- The need for a strong gender perspective and inclusion of children, as well as particularly vulnerable populations, was stressed.

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