



Statement from the World Evangelical Alliance to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the:

5th Thematic Discussion ‘Towards a Global Compact on Refugees’

Panel 2: “How can we ensure a whole-of-society response to large movements and protracted situations?”

15th November 2017

We are faced with the staggering reality that an unprecedented 65.6 million people¹ have been forced from their homes due to conflict and persecution. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees.² How are we the global community to respond? Importantly, we must guarantee that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are upheld; and are the foundation stones to the global compact on refugees.

It is essential that we respond with compassion, show kindness and give dignity to the precious men, women, children and babies who have been uprooted from their homes. Above all, we are to demonstrate God’s unfailing love through practical action and friendship; as it is God Himself who has called us to love one another.

As the World Evangelical Alliance we are serving more than 600 million evangelical Christians. We have 7 regional and 129 national Evangelical Alliances; and over 150 member organisations. We are actively committed and engaged with our members calling everybody to welcome refugees; and to influence our societies to become more enabling when it comes

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html> (14th November, 2017).

² Ibid.

to refugee recovery. Every day, our members are coming alongside refugees to provide food, clothing, safe accommodation, fostering, education, health care, hospitality, befriending, private sponsorship, counselling, pastoral care, language training, legal assistance, support finding employment and job opportunities.

We believe all persons are worthy of respect and are to be given the opportunity to live up to their full potential. Inclusive of our engagement with refugees is the motivation to realign displacement with robust communities of creativity, peace and integral relationships.

To ensure a whole of society response to large movements of refugees and protracted situations we need to make sure that our approach is fully rounded and not only inclusive of humanitarianism, but also economic development, human rights, security and post-conflict recovery. The question that lies before us now is how? Two Oxford University Professors, Sir Paul Collier and Professor Alexander Betts suggest we need to ensure the provision of development areas in the major refugee hosting countries.³ Development areas are specifically enabling environments that allow refugees to be self-sufficient as soon as they arrive in a host country. Development areas can be located in the peripheral parts of the country in which both refugees, the host state and society all mutually benefit from jobs, new markets, and improved public services.⁴

The exact model for development areas will vary across economies that are predominantly manufacturing, agricultural or service-sector based. The key is to identify border locations in the major repeat refugee hosting countries, creating long-term development areas which will generate opportunities for both refugees and the host community.⁵ It is essential that development areas are enabling environments that provide opportunities for employment, the right to work, pre-school education, primary and secondary education, provision of capital, connectivity, transportation, electricity, access to healthcare and basic nutrition.

³ A. Betts and P. Collier, *Refuge Transforming a Broken Refugee System* (UK: Penguin Random House, 2017), p. 205.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

As the World Evangelical Alliance, we propose the establishing of regional development centres⁶ in development areas of the major refugee hosting countries. The remit of regional development centres is robust, broad and allows for diversification due to differing environments. Regional development centres are to meet the immediate needs of refugees and host communities; and to provide access to capital, employment, electricity, education, healthcare, safe drinking water and sanitation, transportation and connectivity. Regional development centres would allow for twinning arrangements with UN Member States. Most importantly, regional development centres also facilitate the attaining of the Sustainable Development Goals.

⁶ M. Beckett, *Hope for the Nations: a vision for the eradication of extreme poverty* (UK, 2012). The paper was included in the *UN NGLS Consultation Report for the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, November 2012.