

Social Protection and the Global Compact on Refugees

Social protection is the set of policies and programs aimed at **protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion** throughout their lifecycle, with a particular emphasis towards helping vulnerable groups to survive, thrive and be resilient when facing shocks and disaster. This includes social assistance, social insurance as well as labour market interventions.

While **social protection measures for refugees** have been pursued under the 1951 Refugee Convention for long, the **global compact principles of burden- and responsibility-sharing** to protect and assist refugees and support host communities and systems **reinforce these opportunities**.

Countries that host refugees make an immense contribution from their own limited resources to the collective good. **Yet, more systematic efforts are needed to scale up social protection systems to cover the needs of refugees and host communities, as stressed by the outcomes of the first International Conference on Social Protection in Contexts of Fragility and Forced Displacement in 2017.** This is in line with the global commitments to 'leave no one behind' and to 'strengthen the links between development and humanitarian programming'.

Donors, bilateral and international agencies, the private sector, local civil society and academic institutions should **work together under the leadership of host governments, to scale up predictable, inclusive and sustainable social protection measures to equitably meet the needs of host and refugee communities**, where appropriate. These efforts can contribute to the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees by:

- Helping refugees to settle in new locations with less disruption to the lives of communities already living in that area;
- Contributing to building peace and social cohesion between different groups in conflict by helping both to equitably meet their basic needs and access decent work, whilst reducing tensions and conflicts over scarce resources. It also reinforces the trust in government, and can help to reintegrate conflict parties back into society after the conflict;
- Providing equal opportunities for the people living in contexts of fragility and forced displacement to participate in and benefit from efforts to reduce poverty and vulnerability such that investments in human capital development are maintained/continued and progressively improved;
- Helping poor households, including through cash transfers, to exit out of poverty, support the local economy and benefit from it, thereby contributing to inclusive growth;
- Helping forcibly displaced to connect to livelihoods and youth to future livelihoods to enable them to contribute to social protection schemes and the national economy, building their self-reliance;
- Protecting livelihoods while contributing to boost families' productive and economic potential also at times of crisis through scalable social protection programs and services.

Where the response capacity of a host state is overwhelmed, improved **coherence and cooperation between humanitarian and development actions are required to assure the long-term and sustainable impact of social protection and equitable access to basic services by forcibly displaced persons.**

Humanitarian assistance can help set up, rejuvenate and/or strengthen social protection systems in contexts of protracted displacement and complex humanitarian emergencies, preparing the way for longer-term development and government scale-up in the future. Early action should be considered before and during displacement crises, in line with national priorities and processes and the humanitarian principles.

With the people at the centre and through efforts aligned behind government-led efforts, **the Global Compact on Refugees provides an important mechanism to work towards universal social protection coverage in contexts of fragility and forced displacement.**

This document highlighting the importance of including social protection in the Global Compact on Refugees was prepared by the organizing team of the 2017 International Conference on Social Protection in Contexts of Fragility and Forced Displacement – including the European Commission/DG DEVCO and DG ECHO, DFID, Finnish, German and Swedish Development Cooperation, FAO, WFP, the World Bank, UNHCR and UNICEF – based on the [outcome document](#) agreed upon by conference participants including governments, international and bilateral organizations, civil society and researchers from 40 countries.

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