

Common vision on supporting pathways to durable solutions for Syrian refugees Brussels 6 Conference – Key messages

I. Introduction

- In the twelfth year of the crisis, there is a **limited common vision for collective outcomes** that the humanitarian and development community should work towards to enable pathways to durable solutions for refugees in countries surrounding Syria.¹
- It is vital to **refocus and regain momentum on what durable solutions in the Middle East can and should look like by combining** innovative policies and interventions that further pathways to durable solutions. This includes revitalizing discussions on effective responsibility-sharing approaches, and looking at resettlement and complementary pathways rather than solely focusing on returns.
- Pathways to durable solutions can only be realised when there is a common understanding between refugee-host governments and the international community on the **prerequisites for creating an enabling environment**, i.e. ensuring the legal, physical, psycho-social and material safety of displaced persons by clearly articulating linkages between meeting immediate humanitarian needs and supporting longer-term positive outcomes.
- The **durable solutions lens** offers an [approach to displacement programming](#) that emphasizes that action can be taken to support durable solutions in all contexts, including in protracted crises and where durable solutions themselves remain a distant prospect.
- Any space to provide pathways to durable solutions does not override the fact that **Syria is not currently safe for refugee returns**. Recent evidence² strongly indicates that returnees are at risk of persecution and other human rights violations, while DSP's solutions analyses on Syria as a whole, northeast Syria and northwest Syria evidence that conditions are not conducive for enabling durable solutions.³

At the critical juncture of the 6th 'Supporting the future of Syria and the region' Conference in Brussels, donors, international financial institutions, refugee-host governments and NGOs need to critically evaluate:

1. The design and implementation of the **humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus (HDPN)** to better support common positive outcomes for displacement-affected communities in the region going forward;
2. The [financing tools and modalities for protracted displacement](#) that most effectively support self-reliance, resilience and social cohesion.

¹ Supporting pathways to durable solutions entails strengthening prospects for durable solutions and supporting refugees' socio-economic inclusion or self-reliance for them to take informed and voluntary decisions if and when solutions become available.

² See for example Amnesty International (2021). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/4583/2021/en/>, Human Rights Watch (2021). <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/10/20/our-lives-are-death/syrian-refugee-returns-lebanon-and-jordan> and Voices for Displaced Syrians Forum (2021). <https://voicesforsyrians.org/is-syria-safe-for-return-returnees-perspectives/>

³ Available upon request.

II. Implementing the triple nexus

- With the number of people who require support to meet their essential needs again increasing, there can be **an overreliance on short-term responses**, which alone cannot tackle the longer-term needs of displacement-affected communities.
- Working on a dual approach of supporting basic needs and longer-term resilience requires a **collaboration between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors**, as well as inter-agency durable solutions plans and strategies.
- Humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding programs are not serial processes; but need to be considered at the same time. **Implementing programs across the nexus** requires coordination and effective participation of displacement-affected communities, e.g. area-based and community-driven approaches, in order for it to be **locally relevant, context-specific and based on common principles** such as sharing responsibility and adopting a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach.

Donors, international financial institutions and refugee-host governments should jointly take stock of the progress made towards supporting pathways to durable solutions. This stock-taking exercise should inform future interventions and among other things entail:

- Supporting, through funding and creating access, actionable research and analysis on the needs and experiences of refugees and host communities, for instance using tools like the [Syria Analytical Framework](#);
- Depoliticising the search for durable solutions, the approach and actions must be guided by displaced persons' needs, intentions, concerns, and decisions, not by politics;
- Ensuring that any move towards folding the refugee response into development cooperation takes into account specific displacement-related needs and protection concerns;
- Ensuring that the lessons learned on how to best support pathways to durable solutions from past displacement responses are included in future interventions, e.g. in the Syrian Refugee Regional Resilience Plan (3RP) roadmap and, for Syria specifically, in the UN Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

III. Financing pathways to durable solutions

- Pathways to durable solutions rely on **financing that supports refugees' socio-economic inclusion and self-reliance**. Displacement financing is a key influencing tool to improve the policy, legal and regulatory environment in refugee-host countries.
- '*You host we pay*' agreements were successful in **aligning refugee-host governments and the international community priorities** on e.g. education, health, livelihood objectives for refugees and host communities. Progress was made from 2016 onwards, but the policy environments in especially Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey are again getting more restrictive and overall available funding is decreasing.
- **ODA is likely to remain the primary source of financing for displacement**. The quality of future interventions will depend on strategically targeted funding that is allocated based on a common vision and collective understanding of (1) the real protection needs and perspectives of Syrian refugees, (2)

the perspectives and needs of host communities and (3) alignment of interventions with longer-term development priorities and plans.

Donors, international financial institutions and refugee-host governments should:

- **Support medium (3-5 years) to longer (5-10 years) term outcomes for Syrian refugees and their host communities by ensuring coherence between humanitarian and development financing streams**, they should be used in complementary ways to meet immediate needs while working to address structural vulnerabilities and risks over the longer term. Notable initiatives to overcome structural barriers in the way the aid system is set up are the 3RP and the PROSPECTS Partnership. All three aim to bring the development and humanitarian communities closer together. Nevertheless, there are still considerable differences– in understanding, systems, ways of operating, and time horizons – to bridge.
- **Effectively prioritise concessional financing, which includes multi-year funding that both meets immediate needs and supports medium to longer term approaches.** In practice, this means including learning from previous iterations in second generation funding instruments; disaggregating ODA financing needs to analyse how much of ODA is oriented towards medium to longer term approaches; and carefully targeting financing based on what works given that resources are always limited;
- **Increase the volume of blended financing targeting refugees in sectors where there can be commercially viable financial return**, e.g. through de-risking lending to SMEs, grant financing to start-ups and expansion of key infrastructure;
- **Ensure that displacement-affected communities’ perspectives** are considered in all phases of the application of the funding instrument, including project design and implementation;
- **In Jordan, maintain financing that specifically targets refugees so that their specific needs and priorities are not lost in the broader development agenda** and so that refugees benefit from the new jobs created. This is especially relevant given the discussions about a new Compact, which should draw on lessons learned from the first iteration of the Jordan Compact to more effectively create an enabling environment for refugees and support country ownership.
- **In Lebanon, make greater use of grant funding to increase leverage in promoting a more enabling environment for refugees** and, given the current economic circumstances and heavy debt burden of the GoL, proceed with great caution in advancing additional lending. Also further explore alternative financing mechanisms, such as **preferential trade agreements for certain sectors**, to circumvent blockages put up by the government and encourage policy change for more favourable business conditions.

IV. Supporting pathways to durable solutions for IDPs

- **DSP’s solutions analyses on Syria, alongside other sources of evidence, show that conditions in Syria are far from conducive for most displaced Syrians to pursue durable solutions within the country.** New displacements continue, while many experience protracted or multiple displacements. Recently surveyed host communities express the desire to explore onward movement, indicating the existing risks for further displacement.⁴

⁴ See Voices for Displaced Syrians Forum (2021).

- The **absence of a comprehensive monitoring mechanism for returns, relocations, or integration** – distinguishing between assisted and spontaneous movements – hampers efforts to understand the choices faced by individuals and to safely help reduce the barriers faced by those looking towards more durable solutions.
- **Destruction of homes and infrastructure and inadequate basic services** in areas of origin are some of the main reasons preventing return of IDPs. For many, it is also impossible to return to areas of origin under control of Turkish-backed armed groups or the Government of Syria due to protection concerns, while the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) is reluctant to allow the integration of IDPs originating from areas currently under control of the Government of Syria into northeast Syria.
- **Investing in individuals' and communities' ability to become more self-reliant**, e.g. resuming income-generating activities, rehabilitating schools and hospitals, and strengthening the capacity of local authorities to deliver basic services through i.a. early recovery programming, will restore those individuals' and communities' resilience capacity and counter the pull factor to camps, while also facilitating the return of those IDPs residing in camps who wish to do so.
- **Early recovery programming can support durable solutions for displaced Syrians.** A common vision and understanding of the prerequisites for creating an environment that supports solutions is needed, and relies on better articulating linkages between meeting immediate humanitarian needs and supporting positive longer-term outcomes for displaced and host communities in Syria. In the current context, this requires looking towards area-based and community-driven approaches.

Donors should:

- Ensure sufficient long-term funding and programming to **support IDPs and refugees to build self-reliance and maintain dignity in displacement**, while ensuring that humanitarian funding in Syria addresses the resilience and recovery needs in areas of return. Considerations of conflict sensitivity, social inclusion, and community engagement are central to supporting a 'do no harm' approach across Syria. In NES, longer-term funding and more attention should be provided to support resilience and recovery efforts in out-of-camp locations in NES. In NWS, a longer-term approach is required while ensuring that protection remains central in all humanitarian response strategies and interventions.
- **Where possible and appropriate, strengthen the capacity of local authorities to deliver basic services** through i.a. early recovery programming in order to restore individuals' and communities' resilience capacity and counter the pull factor to camps, while also facilitating the return of those IDPs residing in camps who wish to do so.

In case of further questions or clarifications, please contact:

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