

ReDSS brief and talking points

Supporting Refugees and their Host Communities in the Horn and East Africa

Wednesday 10th May, Lancaster House, London, 14.00 - 17.00

Background on displacement and refugees in East Africa

Displacement in Eastern Africa is predominantly of a protracted nature. At the end of March 2017, there were almost 13 million people displaced in the region- with 4 million refugees mostly from South Sudan and Somalia, and at least half are children. More than one million children have fled escalating violence in South Sudan, so almost one in five children.

The vast majority of refugees have been hosted in neighbouring countries for decades. Uganda is currently hosting 1.2 million refugees making it the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, with more than 62 % being children. **Uganda has welcomed more refugees in the last month of 2016 than the total number of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean into Europe.**

Although most have been displaced for several years or even decades, few have durable solutions prospects such as returning to their home, being integrated into their host communities or settle elsewhere. These 3 durable solutions options (voluntary repatriation, local (re)integration or resettlement elsewhere) are processes, they are not solutions in and of themselves. The ultimate goal for all is (re)integration. So **return is not a solution, (re)integration is and so development actors have a key role to play.**

New approaches are needed for effective humanitarian-development coordination to find solutions to protracted displacement and give the millions of displaced a chance of a better life with dignity and self-reliance.

We have a collective responsibility to challenge our structures and systems to do more and better together in the search for durable solutions for displacement affected communities¹ in the region. This is why the CRRF process and the various ongoing Solutions policy and programming initiatives in the region are critical to ensure that we address displacement and solutions differently.

This change requires political resolve, long-term investments and a multi-sectorial rights and needs based programming approach to work towards prevention and solutions to reduce displacement levels.

The CRRF pilot process must go beyond 'business as usual' with key stakeholders involved in order to test and refine new ways of working. And the Global Compact on Refugees should be written in a way to inspire Member State action and provide a clear road map in fulfilling their responsibility to a better response to protracted refugee situations.

We, ReDSS members, commit to work together and to be collectively held accountable for the implementation of our commitments as stipulated below. It is our hoped that such an approach, developed in the spirit of the New York Declaration, will support countries and communities that host refugees in improving asylum space, integrated access to services, inclusive economic opportunities and infrastructure for all.

This event also provides an opportunity to call on the international community to demonstrate solidarity with IGAD member states through responsibility sharing and increased resettlement quotas for refugees.

ReDSS commitments and recommendations

1. Support the integration of displacement and durable solutions in national development plans and in peace negotiations and agreements
2. Develop common Solutions Framework to support joint accountability and analysis (example of IGAD Plan of Action and Somalia Solution initiative)
3. Strengthen self-reliance through freedom of movement and right to work – and integrated programming for both displaced and host communities - away from care and maintenance approach
4. Foster localized approaches and better engage local actors and communities in the search for durable solutions to ensure ownership, local relevance and social cohesion
5. Invest in youth and in solutions in urban context

¹ The term 'displacement affected communities' entails all displaced populations and host communities.

Commitments and recommendations (to inform the discussion)

1. Support the integration of displacement and durable solutions in national development plans and in peace negotiations and agreements

Political will and longer term investment from development actors are critical in the search of durable solutions for displacement affected communities in the region. It is key to complement humanitarian action, which is still essential in many places in Eastern Africa, with developmental approaches aimed at integrating marginalized displacement affected communities into development planning, programming and implementation with a view to make them self-sufficient.

The inclusion of displacement and durable solutions into national development programming namely by including refugees and returnees in key sectors such as health, education, and good governance, is of critical importance.

National, regional and local authorities have the primary responsibility and they need to be supported to be able to play a leadership and coordinating role. It is essential to strengthen their capacity and to support the integration of protracted displacement and durable solutions in national development plans and in peace negotiations and agreements.

2. Develop comprehensive national and regional Solutions frameworks with common outcomes to support joint accountability and analysis and to improve data and knowledge management on displacement in the region

Creating durable solutions requires a multi- stakeholder and sectoral, rights and needs based programming approach. Addressing physical, material and legal safety of displaced people as a whole is critical in the search for durable solutions and requires contributions from all sectors.

Therefore **the process must be viewed as a collective action rather than mandate driven** based on an inclusive, participatory and consensus building approach - our common goal being to give the millions of displaced persons a chance of a better life with dignity and self-reliance.

It is **critical to improve the generation and availability of relevant data and analysis** to better understand and operationalize complementary humanitarian and developmental approaches in the search for durable solutions and to mitigate against secondary displacements. There are quite a lot of available data and needs' assessments in the region but most of them don't have a displacement component. So different type of data and analysis are required, building on what exists, to have better 'profiling'/ understanding of displaced and host communities (skills assessments, DRR/ environmental/ urban assessments, economic and market/ private sector analysis, absorption capacity of different sectors...).

At a time when displacement levels continue to rise in the region, there is an urgent need for comprehensive and contextualized analysis of the nuanced and complex interplay between drivers of displacement (environmental, societal, political and economic) and the more immediate triggers such as conflict in order to inform effective strategies for realizing durable solutions.

This requires to **adopt comprehensive national and regional Solutions framework with common outcomes to support joint accountability and analysis** and to improve data and knowledge management on displacement in the region.

This is what IGAD Nairobi Plan of Action is about and is a good step in that direction that should be expanded to the South Sudanese refugee crisis. Similarly, the Somalia Durable Solution Initiative, is a good example where humanitarian and development actors are coming together under the leadership of the government and of the UN Resident Coordinator, developing joint Solution analyses to inform areas based action plan.

3. Humanitarian and development nexus in the search for solutions: strengthening self-reliance through freedom of movement and right to work – and integrated programing for both displaced and host communities away from care and maintenance approach

Given the unlikelihood of return or resettlement in the early stages of displacement and the number of protracted refugee crises in the region, **early solutions is key to promote, support and facilitate solutions processes in the early stages of displacement.**

A solutions oriented approach must inevitably **have a primary focus on building refugee self-reliance and resilience in the country of asylum. And this cannot be achieved without refugees having the right to work and freedom of movement.**

Solutions planning therefore places a focus on increasing self-reliance and **integrated programing for both displaced and host communities**, factoring in appropriate economic, environmental and social considerations (legal, material and physical safety).

Equally important, **involving development actors involved from the start of displacement** is a key opportunity to complement humanitarian interventions by bringing development specialists to support the collective effort and inform medium to longer term planning, creating the space required to plan for durable solutions (*Emergency deployment of non-emergency people to support early solutions thinking and planning: urban planners, community engagement specialists, etc.*).

ReDSS members call on the international community to provide adequate long-term and predictable political and financial support to countries and communities that host displaced populations, in such ways that **improve inclusive access to services and economic opportunities**, including on housing, employment, education, access to health care and other vital public services and infrastructure for all.

4. Foster localized approaches and better engage local actors and communities in the search for durable solutions to ensure ownership, local relevance and social cohesion

It is essential to **adopt a ‘displacement affected communities’** approach- inclusive of refugees, returnees and host communities – and to **place our collective accountability to displaced populations** at the centre of our action.

Community engagement is critical to inform reintegration analysis and programing. As numerous researches have shown, return and (re)integration successes depend by large on the degree of participation accorded to displaced populations and host communities, which involve extensive period of consultation, sensitisation, negotiation, conflict resolution according to class, gender, age, clans, etc.

It is of paramount to recognise that displacement affected communities have the right and the capacity to participate to any decision impacting their life and a participatory process is key to support return and reintegration processes in order to make solutions lasting, locally relevant and supportive of social cohesion. to ensure social inclusion.

We must therefore collectively invest into capacities to sustain solutions locally and nationally. Such investments will strengthen national institutions and partnerships that can sustain locally owned solutions.

5. Invest in Youth and in solutions in urban context

Investing in youth and education is crucial. Failing the children and youth risks creating a lost generation and sets us on a path toward new conflicts and greater displacement in the future.

Improve knowledge and solutions programing in urban contexts: more and more refugees and returnees are in urban centres. This highlights the urgent need to seek solutions in urban environments.