

Event: Expert consultation with Member States on Forced Displacement and Development

Date: 22nd of January 2016,

Location: Leopold Hotel, Brussels, Belgium

Summary of the event:

The expert consultation, hosted by the European Commission, addressed the growing importance of protracted forced displacement as a strategic policy issue. It was attended by representatives of 23 Member States.

To respond adequately to the challenges and opportunities posed by protracted forced displacement, the Commission proposed a Communication on Forced Displacement and Development to be adopted in 2016. It will set out a novel, development-oriented policy approach to supporting refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees and host populations in partner countries with an impact on policy dialogue and the delivery of development and humanitarian assistance. As part of the adoption process, the Commission is consulting many internal and external actors.

Forcibly displaced people benefit from humanitarian assistance but they are often excluded from programmes and activities carried out by development and institutional actors with the result that their developmental needs are neglected and no opportunities for self-reliance are created. At the same time, vulnerable host populations might not benefit from humanitarian assistance, leading to potential tensions and conflicts between communities and further displacements.

Prior to the consultation, the participants had been provided with a consultation “non-paper” drafted by the Commission. The objective of this non-paper was to identify an appropriate mix of the best suited global practices and EU external action instruments to best address the issue of forced displacement, as well as operational guidelines and modalities for their effective and efficient deployment, both at EU level and with partners. The “non-paper” introduced the relevant topics and sub-topics, and served as a basis for the ensuing discussions. EU Member States as well as partner organisations provided written comments on the non-paper in advance, which were summarized by the moderator, Mr. Niels Harild during the expert consultation. With 36 years of experience in the field, Mr. Harild not only moderated the event, but also briefly presented a meta analysis undertaken by Professor Roger Zetter, who was not able to attend the consultation. A multifaceted discussion followed, allowing participants to provide feedback, technical inputs and voice their opinions. Ultimately, the different inputs, both written and oral, will be used in the drafting of the Commission Communication.

Introduction:

The consultation was opened by DG ECHO, DG NEAR and DG DEVCO laying out the EU’s objectives as well as the process leading up to the adoption of the Communication. It was stressed that the purpose of the consultation is to find good practices and innovative approaches on how best to tackle the challenges posed by protracted forced displacement. The aim of the Communication is not to build an abstract policy, but something practical that can be operationalised and efficiently improve the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons.

The speakers highlighted that the issue of forced displacement cannot be viewed simply as a humanitarian challenge, but that it is also a development issue and that development actors must be involved from the beginning of a crisis. The contemporary model of handling forced displacement is ineffective, creating a “lose-lose” situation for both host countries and forcibly displaced persons. The EU seeks to turn this negative tendency around, creating a “win-win” model that benefits all involved parties. A new comprehensive approach should include both humanitarian assistance and development cooperation, and engage more systematically with governments, local authorities, the private sector, and other stakeholders enhancing self-reliance in the communities of displaced people by creating jobs and development opportunities.

In 2014, the total financial contributions in Syria from development/resilience funds were higher than from humanitarian sources. The European Commission mobilized funding from seven different financial instruments and has established a Trust Fund (the Madad Fund) that draws from different financial instruments. This fund totalises close to 650 million euros from which only 52 million comes from the Member States to date (January 2016). This fund has been notably put in place to ensure the schooling of children refugees among other priorities, such as health, sanitation, hygiene, and increasing livelihoods. The objective of the support provided in host countries is to provide prospects for refugees (safe legal status, access to job market and social services). The EU is currently developing large “compacts” with Jordan and Lebanon (comprehensive aid and support packages which combine policy elements within EU competencies (assistance, trade, mobility, etc) in exchange of host countries commitments on social and economic inclusion of Syrian refugees). The countries neighbouring Syria are acknowledging the fact that people will remain there for medium- long term. The aim is therefore to provide them with life prospects, schooling, labour, etc which would have a positive effect for both the migrants and the host society.

One politically sensitive point is the reluctance of the host government to allow refugees to be self-reliant, because this would suggest that the refugees would stay permanently in the host country. The aim is to have a dialogue with the host governments that longer term but temporary self reliance until lasting solutions can be found is ultimately in their interest. To accomplish this task, more data should be collected and statistical and operational evidence should be presented. The openness of host government to foresee potential benefits on their economy and stability arriving from refugees and IDPs, who are economically productive actors, will be crucial.

The written inputs received were mostly in agreement with the non-paper and its problem statement: the need to tackle protracted displacement and to prevent new displacement crisis to become protracted. The Commission welcomed the wide range of contributions, suggesting that they will help improve and expand its understanding of the issue as well as the range of available solutions and best practises. Main points included:

- focus on conflict induced forced displacement, refugees, IDPs and directly affected host and return communities and provide clear definitions of IDPs and refugees;
- recognize that “business as usual” is not an option;
- accent that political space provided by governments is important work towards unlocking protracted displacement and to prevent displacement crisis from becoming protracted;
- be global, and not only focus on the Syrian crisis, recognizing that there are many other crises that are also important;
- recognize that a long term engagement and commitment is required and to be strategic more than prescriptive and to promote comprehensive development approach taking into account political, economic, social, fiscal, humanitarian, private sector and security issues.

Summary of the Discussions:

The non-paper was divided into four sections. Each section, and a summary of all relevant discussions, are presented below:

1. Durable solutions and inclusion

How to advocate for and contribute to increased inclusion during displacement to promote durable solutions?

- *Which factors are important? E.g. temporary access to housing, education, the labour market and basic services, resolution of land, housing and property disputes, other?*
- *Which advocacy strategies should be taken?*

- I. Most participants agreed that political space is a precondition. This political space needs to be supported when it is there, created when it is not there through creative policy dialogue. Thus, it is

key to recognise the importance of the leading role of governments. Policy dialogue must be based on evidence, and designed to address host countries' concerns.

- II. The EU should support host governments' policies that would allow refugees to access the job market, resources, access to lands and to loans to improve self reliance towards the goal of lasting solutions including voluntary return.
- III. When aiming to support temporary inclusion of displaced persons, a first step is to build trust between donors and host countries. Not only should the EU approach support governments to change their practices, but donors should change their practices as well. This can be done by enhancing analysis and understanding of the political context of the country and by being credible and collaborative in creating partnerships across different actors and the donor community and delivering programmes designed in cooperation with host governments. This can create the political space required and leverage the path towards durable solutions through development interventions.
- IV. The debate of the European Union on the current refugee and migration crisis proposes short term solutions for a problem that is long term. The need to provide a strong policy dialogue was stressed, as was the importance to act collectively and to have a common approach in addressing host country's needs towards sustainable solutions. It is essential to develop policies on effective, sometimes temporary integration both within and outside of the EU.
- V. One of the participants raised the question of funding and the aid architecture - about how donors could adapt to the new reality. There are concerns that some humanitarian actors may not be willing to adapt to this new way of thinking.

2. Stronger evidence base

How can donors and implementing partners work with affected governments and other actors to ensure sound and shared context analyses and assess the need to trigger involvement of development actors in addressing forced displacement jointly with humanitarians from the onset of a crisis?

- How to move from short term to longer term comprehensive policies?

- Do you have experience with joint needs assessment, programming, economic analyses and quantitative indicators?

- I. The participants voiced support for the proposals presented in the non-paper, which suggest more rigorous data collection and the strengthening of quantitative and qualitative analysis. In addition many member states reiterated the need for comprehensive context analysis done jointly but led by the development side. Mapping all the best internal and external practices should be an ongoing process, continuously adapted to the partner government's medium and long-term objectives. A point was raised on the need to have gender sensitivity and a focus on vulnerable persons, the needs of children, disabled etc. and last but perhaps most importantly also to take into considerations the consequences of inaction.
- II. It is important to define why "evidence-based" research is important. It includes:
 - the analysis of the policies towards displaced people;
 - the actual impact of displacement on local social economic conditions;
 - the existent vulnerabilities and the coping strategies amongst local communities, authorities and the displaced people.Country economic and social impact-assessments have limited application, and thus far they have only been carried out in a limited number of countries. There must be a comprehensive needs assessment, which assesses who are the refugees residing in a country (demographic assessments) and who the host countries are helping in order to be able to provide support.

- III. The EU supports a number of countries both through development cooperation instruments as well as with humanitarian assistance. It is problematic that displaced persons are not a priority for development actors and it is important that they become one. The fact that DG DEVCO, DG ECHO and DG NEAR are co-hosting this meeting serves as a testament to the new approach, which should include both development and humanitarian actors. But what is new is that this policy looks at the displacement issue from a predominantly development perspective.
- IV. One of the participants referred to the recently created Trust Funds (Syrian crisis “Madad” TF, Africa TF), and asked what the lessons learnt thus far have been. The response to the question was that it was probably too early to draw on extensive lessons learnt, as both funds have just started operating, but that it was clearly adding value in terms of rapidity and flexibility of committing funds, which is an asset in urgent crisis situation. Nonetheless, the question of the right balance between rapidity and quality needs to be kept in mind when analysing the effectiveness of this model.

3. Macro-economic interventions

How to use best the comparative advantages of all actors and instruments involved in order to implement sustainable and innovative socio-economic approaches to forced displacement?

- *How to improve the selection of livelihood interventions so that successful promotion of skills and vocational training are based on analysis of labour market conditions, gaps and workforce composition?*
 - *How to work on livelihood programmes in restrictive policy contexts?*
- *What are your experiences with inclusion of macroeconomic approaches into development programming? What are your experiences in working with IFI's?*
 - *How to better balance support of capacity building and direct support/delivery of services?*

- I. In order to create sustainable approaches, the private sector is key. Regarding engagement with the private sector, a need was identified to share existing practices since only a limited number of examples exist. Engaging with the private sector can enhance our knowledge of the local market.
- II. It is important to assess whether the economic instruments used are the right ones, if they are effective, and if the strategy needs to be revised.
- III. Livelihoods interventions and support have to address host countries' development priorities. Long term interventions should use governments' systems to reduce costs and achieve sustainability. When the government is unable to cope, short-term humanitarian assistance should be provided.

4. Level of intervention

How can the mainstreaming of forcibly displaced populations into development programming (donors and implementing partners) and national development plans (country, regional and local level) be supported?

- *How to tailor interventions in different settings – camp and out of camp, urban or rural?*
 - *How to cooperate with local authorities while respecting the coordinating and decision making role of the national government?*
- IV. All development responses need to be part of national development action plans to be effective (as opposed to being stand-alone activities).
 - V. As of today the policies are shifting, UNHCR is now promoting policies in alternative to refugee camps, the vulnerabilities of both displaced persons and host communities should be assessed.

Additionally, the general requirement manifested is the need to have the governments in the lead from the beginning to achieve the required policy changes.

- VI. A question was raised on the need to mainstream forced displacement into development policy. The answer is to take into account best practices in this area with a focus on the integration of displaced people rather than on assistance.
- VII. On the levels of intervention, linking humanitarian and development actions is part of the challenge. Development assistance is very focused on the state level and humanitarian assistance on the community level.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the European Commission thanked all participants for their valuable inputs. With protracted forced displacement remaining as one of the major topics in the future, it was encouraging to see the predominant consensual approach to the issue.