

Event: **Expert consultation with International Organisations, NGOs, CSOs, Private Sector and Academia on Forced Displacement and Development**

Date: **21st of January 2016,**

Location: **Renaissance Hotel, Brussels, Belgium**

Summary of the event:

The expert consultation, hosted by the European Commission (DG ECHO, DG DEVCO and DG NEAR, addressed the growing importance of protracted forced displacement as a strategic policy issue. It was attended by almost 40 organisations, including international organisations, NGOs, CSOs, private sector actors, think-tanks and experts from the academia.

To respond adequately to the challenges and opportunities posed by protracted forced displacement, the Commission plans to propose 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 actors such as the EEAS and there is a formal inter-service consultation process ongoing.

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 “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. Participating organisations had provided written comments on the non-paper in advance, which were summarized by the moderator, Mr. Niels Harild, during the conference. 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 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 “business as usual is no longer an option” and the purpose of the consultation was to identify 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 people.

The speakers highlighted that the issue of forced displacement could not be viewed as a humanitarian challenge only, 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 people. The Commission 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.

The written inputs received were mostly in agreement with the non-paper and its problem statement: the need to tackle existing protracted displacement and to prevent new displacement crises from becoming protracted. The Commission welcomed the wide range of contributions, suggesting that they would help improve and expand it's the understanding of the issue as well as the range of available solutions and best practises. Main points that the future Commission Communication should include:

- 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;
- stress that political space provided by governments is an important enabler towards unlocking protracted displacement and preventing displacement crises from becoming protracted;
- be global, and not only focus on the Syrian crisis, recognizing that there are many other crises that are also important/protracted;
- 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 stability issues.

Summary of the Discussions:

The consultation non-paper was divided into four sections. Each section, the discussion questions and a summary of all relevant discussions linked to it, 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. The general comments on this point focused on the importance of a conducive political space, and how to best create a productive dialogue with host governments. The role of the host government cannot be overstated: they have a crucial role to play on political, economic and fiscal issues. Thus, policy dialogues should be established at an early stage, and if they are to be effective, they should address host countries' concerns, community needs, and the needs of the displaced alike. A needs assessment is essential to inform engagement with local authorities and governments in policy dialogue.
- ii. The EU should support governments in facilitating the right to work, move freely, open access to transitional resources for the displaced, while also aiming at increasing investments in regions heavily affected by forced displacement, and provide financial support in order to share the costs of an effective policy on forced displacement.
- iii. Another set of comments focused on the need for a stronger and clearer communication with local authorities. More specifically, support to the decentralization processes should be a part of a holistic approach.
- iv. A comment followed on the need not to forget the specific characteristics and needs of medium income countries, for example Morocco, which has been developing a strategy for migration including asylum, and new laws against trafficking.

- v. A comment was made on the necessity to take into consideration the number of displaced children, as half of the displaced population is composed of minors. An effective integration strategy should focus on the needs of children.
- vi. One shortcoming identified by participating organisations is the lack of clarity in defining commonly used concepts and terms in the debate of forced displacement. There is a need for a clear definition of refugees and IDPs.
- vii. Additionally, contrary to current practices in many countries, establishing a refugee camp should be a last resort policy. Refugee camps are a short term solution that contributes to isolation. A better solution for displaced populations is to live in local communities and to have as normal a life as possible through temporary integration, until a durable solution can be found.
- viii. When talking about inclusion it is also important to mention access to land and access to natural resources in the host countries in a perspective of promotion of social cohesion and conflict prevention.

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. Evidence based data analysis is a powerful tool to negotiate with governments, thus the value of research is substantial.
- ii. The use of the qualitative and quantitative indicators needs to be improved and broadened, in order to improve understanding of the different vulnerabilities within displaced populations. Assessments should also include vulnerable segments of host communities.
- iii. There is a need for a multi-stakeholder analysis and the use of the different types of assessment and methodologies. A challenge is to effectively combine quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to achieve better results.
- iv. “Joint Assessment Missions” were mentioned as a good example for creating baseline data. While so far the focus is largely being placed on quantitative humanitarian indicators, more development-oriented indicators could potentially be included and development actors could also possibly join these missions.
- v. It is important to have a better understanding of the knowledge gaps, of the missing information and data about the changing needs and the population at risk of being displaced. Creating a comprehensive picture of displacement is very difficult and the lack of evidence prevents the agencies from developing and implementing a policy across different countries.
- vi. One of the comments suggested that qualitative data obtained in the field may be more useful than the vast amounts of quantitative data that already being collected. A question was raised on how much data we possess at this very moment, and how exactly this data can be used by policy makers in an effective manner.
- vii. A point was raised about the cooperation with national statistics offices in collecting and gathering data to ensure that national governments will consider the results. There was general agreement on taking a bottom-up approach to collecting data from those who are most affected. Information extracted from the analysis should inform the preparation of new policies bearing in mind that collecting data in developing countries can be problematic.

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. The discussion was centred on how best to improve socio-economic (temporary) integration and focused on how to design livelihood programmes including how to enhance macroeconomic aspects.
- ii. An important point mentioned was that livelihoods are not predominantly a humanitarian task, but rather the responsibility of development actors. Nonetheless, humanitarian interventions have to take into account mid- to longer term livelihood prospects and economic needs. Humanitarian agencies and NGOs should however stick to minimum criteria for livelihoods interventions. Creating employment is very challenging: it is not possible to create sustainable employment for hundreds of thousands of people without massive development investments and a long-term perspective.
- iii. Another point highlighted in this context was that livelihood interventions often do not succeed where there is no sufficient access to basic services. It is therefore key to keep in mind that many factors can contribute to self-reliance, access to opportunities, rights, etc. Multi-sector approaches are therefore crucial.
- iv. Access to finance is important, however, it is often difficult to accomplish. Social capital is also important, and the value added often underestimated.
- v. Violence is also a major concern preventing self-reliance. Prevention and protective systems should deliver relevant services on this topic, with a particular focus on children.

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?*

- i. The general comments made focused on the need for comprehensive joint planning and analysis of camps, settlements and hosting communities, as well as the implication the type of settlement has from the national perspective and for local authorities. The needs of displaced populations and host communities are interlinked and cross cutting. In particular in urban environments, there should be an improvement for urban development plans and policies taking into account forcibly displaced populations.
- ii. Most participants agreed that two things that are of crucial importance: improving urban development policies and stimulating the host countries' economies by improving private sector investments.
- iii. One of the shortcomings of the non-paper that was highlighted again is the lack of comments regarding children who make up half of the population of displaced and have specific needs.

- iv. Another important point raised is that it shouldn't be assumed that humanitarian and development actors will always have access to vulnerable populations. It is possible to put in place new policies only if access to the population is possible. Also, if governments are not collaborating, no policy – no matter how good - will have relevance on the ground.
- v. In addition, a “one-size-fits-all” approach will not be effective and the solutions should be tailored accordingly. Nonetheless, established core principles should be valid in all cases.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, several points were highlighted for further consideration:

- i. The focus of the planned Communication is not to elaborate a migration policy but on a novel development-oriented approach towards protracted forced displacement. The final goal is that forced displacement is recognized as and dealt with as a development issue.
- ii. The consultation reflected a growing global consensus that forced displacement and, in particular, protracted displacement is not only a humanitarian challenge, but a political, developmental and economic one.
- iii. Regarding the question of how to bring together the development and the humanitarian communities and how the EU foresees to overcome this divide as a donor, the fact that DG ECHO, DEVCO and NEAR are collaborating closely on the Communication shows that the EU is changing its approach in practice. In theory, the idea of connecting humanitarian and development actors through a joint approach, based on the resilience approach, is very appealing. In practice, the implementation of this idea will be a long process.
- iv. In addition to cooperating closely as humanitarian and development actors, it is also key to enhance cooperation with ministries, private sector and trade unions.
- v. The new approach to address forced displacement will focus on conflict-induced displacement while elements of the new policy approach might be relevant to climate or disaster induced displacement.