

Supporting pathways to durable solutions for Syria's displaced

Brussels 7 Conference – Key Messages

I. Introduction

- In the thirteenth year of the crisis, there is **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 and for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria.¹
- The **factors influencing protracted displacement** in the region, and those causing the multiple forced displacements of many IDPs inside Syria, have largely not changed over the past years, but instead continue to be exacerbated by new shocks. As a result, the number of people suffering from extreme poverty in Syria and the region is ever-increasing, with very limited prospects for improvement in their living situation.

II. Supporting pathways to durable solutions for refugees

- Without a **political solution**, which is a prerequisite to addressing the root causes of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, there will unlikely be any big shifts in the number of people that are displaced, and any pathways to durable solutions will depend on strengthened socio-economic inclusion in areas of displacement. For refugees this means that inclusion in neighbouring countries should remain at the top of the aid community's agenda, this requires:
 - a common understanding between hosting 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;
 - coordination and effective participation of displacement-affected communities in implementing programs across the nexus, e.g. through **area-based and community-driven approaches that are locally relevant, context-specific and based on common principles** such as sharing responsibility and adopting a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach.
- It is also **critical that countries outside the region increase their commitment to resettlement and complementary pathways** to protect the rights and dignity of Syrian refugees, as well as reducing the risks of refugees pursuing irregular and dangerous migration.
- Any space to provide pathways to durable solutions does not override the fact that **Syria is not currently safe for refugee returns**. Returnees are at risk of persecution and other human rights violations,² while DSP's [analytical framework](#) for solutions analyses on Syria as a whole, northeast Syria and northwest Syria³ evidences that conditions are not conducive for enabling integration.

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: Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (2023) [G2301021.pdf \(un.org\)](#); 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>; Voices for Displaced Syrians Forum (2021) <https://voicesforsyrians.org/is-syria-safe-for-return-returnees-perspectives/>.

³ Available upon request.

III. Financing pathways to durable solutions for refugees

- 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-hosting countries.
- *'You host we pay'* agreements were successful in **aligning refugee-hosting 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 Türkiye have gotten 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.
- At the critical juncture of the 7th 'Supporting the future of Syria and the region' Conference, **donors, international financial institutions, refugee-hosting governments and NGOs need to critically evaluate the design and implementation of the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus (HDPN) and the financing tools and modalities for protracted displacement** that most effectively support self-reliance, resilience and social cohesion. In this, donors, international financial institutions and refugee-hosting governments should:
 - **effectively prioritise concessional financing, which includes multi-year funding that both meets immediate needs and supports medium to longer term approaches**. In practice, this requires 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.

IV. Supporting pathways to durable solutions for IDPs

- **Destruction of homes and infrastructure and inadequate basic services** in areas of origin are some of the main factors preventing pathways to solutions for IDPs. For many, it is 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.
- 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.
- **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.

- The general recognition that Syria has not yet attained UNHCR-specified protection thresholds for safe return of refugees, should not impede **considering both the rights and needs of the displaced in early recovery or resilience-oriented programming (ERR)**. Recent research⁴ among practitioners shows that early recovery activities, which should be implemented for all communities, often lack analysis of displacement dynamics and related needs. This has the potential both to cause harm to displacement-affected communities and miss any opportunities to support pathways to the achievement of durable solutions, putting them further out of reach. As such, donors and UN agencies should:
 - **ensure that early recovery programming in Syria includes a durable solutions lens** that is built on thorough analysis, and that is responsive to the specific needs of displacement-affected communities in different geographic areas. For instance in northeast Syria, longer-term funding and more attention should be provided to support resilience and recovery efforts in out-of-camp locations while in northwest Syria, 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 in order to restore individuals' and communities' resilience capacity and counter the pull factor to camps.

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⁴ Available upon request.