

## BRIEFING NOTE

# DURABLE SOLUTIONS PROGRAMMING

*This briefing note defines durable solutions programming and outlines its principles and enabling factors. An overview of the different types of interventions and approaches that constitute durable solutions programming is also provided. The key message is that action can be taken to support durable solutions in all contexts, even where the durable solutions themselves remain a distant prospect. Durable solutions programming must also always be local relevant and context-specific. The ideas and approaches outlined in this briefing note will be expanded further in a toolkit being developed by DSP.*

## DURABLE SOLUTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East context has a long history of forced migration. In 2021, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported that around 5.5 million refugees and 12 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) were in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Yemen and Iraq alone.<sup>1</sup> The recent emergency crises and protracted conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen have produced large displacement waves and have impacted neighboring countries' ability to support those fleeing. As crises continue to be protracted, and the majority of displaced people live between not being able to return home in a safe and dignified manner, and having limited pathways for local integration and resettlement, it has become critical that programs and interventions adapt and orient to support pathways to medium- and long-term solutions.

A durable solution is reached when a displaced person no longer has any protection or assistance needs related to their displacement, and can exercise their rights without discrimination linked to their displacement.<sup>2</sup> There are three internationally recognized pathways for IDPs and refugees to achieve durable solutions, namely voluntary return in safety and dignity, local integration, and resettlement (for refugees) or settlement elsewhere in the country (for IDPs). Supporting durable solutions pathways from a programming perspective requires considering the priorities of displaced persons themselves, and factors such as protection, safety and security, access to shelter, food and basic services, access to livelihoods, the restoration of housing, land and property, and access to documentation.

While the focus of this briefing note is on programming, it must be recognized that many of the barriers to durable solutions are related to policy, and therefore all durable solutions programming efforts must inform and be closely aligned with advocacy and policy influencing efforts.

1 UNHCR And IDMC. Refugee Data Finder. 2021

2 This definition is based on the 2010 IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons

## WHAT IS “DURABLE SOLUTIONS PROGRAMMING”?

The need for humanitarian programming to be solutions-oriented, even in the ongoing emergencies and protracted contexts that characterize displacement in the region, has been regularly highlighted. However, the practicalities of implementing programming in these contexts that enables pathways to durable solutions have been less clearly articulated. There is currently no agreed upon definition of durable solutions programming as integrating a durable solutions lens into programming is a complex concept that cuts across various programs and is context-specific. The definition provided below has been developed by the DSP. It is informed by global durable solutions resources and is applicable to the regional context.

**“Durable solutions programming” can be understood to encompass a wide range of interventions and approaches that directly support durable solutions or help to build environments that enable pathways towards future durable solutions in contexts including emergencies and protracted displacement.** These approaches and interventions may vary in terms of complexity and specialization. At a minimum, there are small steps that all programs, regardless of sector or context, can take to incorporate a ‘solutions lens’ in their work, such as gathering and utilizing data disaggregated between displaced and host populations in order to understand and address displacement-specific needs and vulnerabilities. At the other end of the spectrum, multi-sector and multi-actor programs and strategies that have specific, collective outcomes tailored towards increasing integration/reintegration of displaced populations can be implemented- this very much represents an ideal scenario and is dependent on a number of enabling factors being in place.

## ENABLING FACTORS FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS PROGRAMMING

The nature and complexity of durable solutions programming that can be implemented in any given context will be determined by a number of factors. Efforts to implement durable solutions programming will be aided if laws and policies respect the rights of displaced populations, there is no immediate pressure on them to return or relocate, and the authorities show some willingness and capacity to support pathways to durable solutions. The existence of inter-agency durable solutions plans and strategies will also help to create a conducive environment for durable solutions programming, as will any established collaboration between humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, and stabilization actors in addressing displacement. It is also important for displacement-affected communities to see organizations as trustworthy actors, and be willing to share their perspectives, intentions and preferences. Finally, the availability of flexible, multi-year funding will create more opportunities for durable solutions programming.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF DURABLE SOLUTIONS PROGRAMMING

These principles are drawn from global durable solutions resources and have been adapted to the Middle East context. The principles are aspirational in nature but provide a concrete way for practitioners to understand and find ways to adapt, design, and implement programming with a durable solutions lens. The enabling factors outlined above have an impact on how far programming can move towards applying these principles in each particular context.

- 1. Shared Responsibility** - Programming recognizes that promoting and facilitating durable solutions is a collective responsibility. It recognizes that the State has the primary responsibility and, where possible and appropriate, supports national and local authorities to fulfil this responsibility. This includes supporting the inclusion of displaced persons in national and local systems, strategies and policy frameworks, and to the greatest extent possible supporting displaced populations to access shared services provided by national and local service providers rather than creating parallel systems.

2. **Multi-Stakeholder and Multi-Sectoral** - Programming interacts and collaborates with other humanitarian actors, as well as development, stabilization, and peacebuilding actors when they are present, to promote a comprehensive multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral approach to enabling durable solutions pathways. The strengths, weaknesses and specialisms of different actors are leveraged in order to pursue durable solutions in the most efficient and effective manner.
3. **Locally-led** - Programming engages with and supports local actors, including CSOs, the private sector and community representatives, to facilitate locally-led solutions. It recognizes and capitalizes on the local knowledge, expertise, networks and relationships of these actors, and promotes sustainability through supporting them to play a central role in responding to displacement. A focus is placed on piloting interventions at the local level and documenting learning on what works and impact.
4. **People-centered** - Programming meaningfully engages with displaced, returnee and host populations, and is driven by their perspectives, preferences and intentions regarding their own futures. This means that programming pays special attention to the specific concerns and perspectives of women, youth, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups, recognizing that they are likely to face additional barriers to finding durable solutions. The needs of the host population should also be considered equitably, as these often mirror those of the displaced population or are impacted by hosting the displaced population.
5. **Voluntary, Safe & Dignified** – Programming respects the right of displaced persons to make an informed and voluntary choice on what durable solutions option (return, local integration, resettlement) to pursue and provides accurate and timely information to support them to do this. While recognizing that in many contexts return, local integration or resettlement may be unattainable, programming does not create or support incentives that persuade or coerce displaced persons to pursue durable solutions options that are not voluntary, safe and dignified. All programming prioritizes the safety and dignity of those living in displacement-affected communities.
6. **Rights-based** – Programming is guided by the needs, rights, legitimate interests, resources and capacities of displacement-affected communities. It helps individuals in displacement-affected communities to understand and claim their rights, while supporting institutions to protect these rights. Programming works towards helping displaced persons enjoy their economic, legal, social-cultural and civil-political rights without any discrimination for reasons related to their displacement.
7. **Adaptive** - Programming has the flexibility to adapt to changes in the displacement context, changes in community preferences/priorities regarding their own futures, and learning from implementation. This requires flexibility from donors with appropriate funding modalities.
8. **Innovative** - Programming recognizes that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach and that creativity and new approaches are required to support pathways to durable solutions. This may entail working with actors beyond the humanitarian sphere and testing new programming interventions and approaches that build self-reliance, resilience and social cohesion.
9. **Evidence-based** - Programming is informed by evidence and learning on what works to move solutions forward, as well as a sound analysis of the displacement context and the barriers and opportunities for durable solutions. Programs should incorporate benchmarks, outcomes and indicators that are related to solutions - the Syria Analytical Framework<sup>3</sup> can aid in this process.

Many of these principles are important components of an **area-based approach**. An area based approach targets the whole population (displaced, returnee and host populations) within a specific geographical area, integrates multiple sectors, and engages humanitarian, development, stabilization, and peacebuilding actors, civil society, and the private sector. This approach also places an emphasis on supporting national, regional and local authorities to assume their primary responsibility for finding durable solutions.

## DURABLE SOLUTIONS PROGRAMMING INTERVENTIONS AND APPROACHES

Durable solutions programming can entail taking action at the 1) project-, 2) organizational-, and 3) strategic coordination-levels. It engages staff ranging from project managers to senior management, as well as those engaged in inter-agency coordination, in finding ways to push durable solutions forward. The table below provides a summary of action at these three levels.

<p><b><u>PROJECT-LEVEL:</u></b></p> <p><b>Specialized interventions that contribute to a durable solutions outcome</b></p>	<p>Individual projects can make an important contribution to enabling pathways for durable solutions if they help displaced/returnee populations achieve one of the following outcomes<sup>4</sup> without any discrimination on account of being displaced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety and security in their place of residence</li> <li>• Enjoying an adequate standard of living</li> <li>• Secure employment or engagement in economic activity that allows them to be self-sufficient</li> <li>• Enjoying access to housing, land and property with secure tenure</li> <li>• Being able to prove their legal identity and status</li> <li>• Reunification with any family members from whom they were separated</li> <li>• Participation in public decision-making processes</li> <li>• Obtaining remedies for human rights violations which led to their displacement or were suffered as a result of displacement.</li> </ul> <p>Pursuing the above-mentioned outcomes will be dependent on an individual organization’s expertise, capacity, and areas of programming focus. Organizations working in multiple sectors should seek to integrate programming in order to maximize progress towards these outcomes. This may, for example, entail a protection team providing legal awareness and assistance related to work rights to refugees supported by an employment project.</p>
<p><b><u>ORGANIZATIONAL-LEVEL:</u></b></p> <p><b>Solutions mainstreaming throughout all programming</b></p>	<p>Solutions mainstreaming entails paying attention to, and seeking to address, displacement-specific vulnerabilities throughout the program cycle. Small steps can be taken to mainstream durable solutions, for example through developing a needs-based rather than a status-based targeting criteria, supporting displaced populations to access host community services during implementation, or disaggregating monitoring data between displaced and host populations in order to understand and address displacement-specific vulnerabilities. <u>Programming in all sectors in displacement contexts can and should take action to mainstream durable solutions regardless of whether the above-mentioned enabling factors are in place.</u></p>

4 These outcomes correspond to the 8 ‘criteria’ for achieving a durable solution outlined in the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs.

<p><b><u>STRATEGIC COORDINATION LEVEL:</u></b></p> <p><b>Multi-sector, multi-actor programming that has specific, collective outcomes tailored towards increasing integration/reintegration of displaced populations</b></p>	<p>Durable solutions programming should be a collaborative endeavor, with the actors addressing displacement agreeing upon and working towards a set of collective durable solutions outcomes. These collective outcomes can be articulated within a specific project, a program framework, or a durable solutions plan/strategy. To work towards these outcomes, an area-based approach is often adopted.</p> <p><u>This represents an ideal scenario and is largely dependent on the enabling factors highlighted above being in place.</u> If the enabling factors are not in place, however, it may still be possible to adopt elements of this approach. For example, it may still be possible for non-governmental actors to develop a common framework of indicators to collectively measure progress in contexts where local and national authorities are either unwilling or unable to support durable solutions pathways.</p>
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## ENABLING PATHWAYS TO DURABLE SOLUTIONS THROUGH MEDIUM-TERM APPROACHES

Achieving durable solutions remains a distant prospect for the majority of displaced people in the Middle East, and it is not always possible to consider long-term solutions when many of the enabling factors are absent. Therefore, it is important to consider medium-term approaches that support dignified lives and prepare displaced people for their future. Programming that builds resilience and self-reliance can support displaced persons to meet their needs in a sustainable way. By developing interventions like this humanitarian actors can support displaced people to be better prepared to pursue a durable solution when it becomes available to them. Enabling pathways for displaced people allows for the choice of a solution to be taken in a voluntary, informed and dignified way. This means that if a displaced family decides not to return to their area of origin but instead integrate locally into the community that they currently reside in, the choice was made without coercion and supported. Additionally, other programming approaches that are linked to supporting pathways towards durable solutions include but are not limited to: strengthening social cohesion, supporting access to shared services, enhancing social protection, supporting area-based approaches, and integrated programming. These kinds of programming can all contribute positively to creating a more enabling environment for future durable solutions.