

Global Compact on Refugees – Thematic discussions four on solutions

IDMC INTERVENTION FROM THE FLOOR

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More than 550,000 refugees made the arduous journey back to their countries of origin in 2016, mainly to countries experiencing ongoing armed conflict and unresolved displacement crises such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan. So far in 2017, we have already witnessed a similar trend, with refugees returning home to violent conflict and complex emergencies in Syria, Iraq, northeast Nigeria and Myanmar.

Against this backdrop, repatriation carries the inherent risk of de facto internal displacement (if they are unable to go back to their place of origin or sustainably integrate elsewhere) or secondary displacement (if they are forced to uproot their lives once again). This demands a more holistic approach to durable solutions, one that integrates planning and policy for internally displaced people (IDPs) with that for returning refugees to mitigate the risk of people falling through the cracks and into a situation of protracted displacement.

We are concerned that Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework continues to overlook the relationship between durable solutions for returning refugees and internal displacement, and we call for two specific provisions in the global compact's programme of action related to durable solutions and internal displacement.

First, we call on States of origin/nationality to integrate the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into national law and policy.

As a normative framework that reflects the vulnerabilities, needs and barriers to rights experienced by displaced people under the protection of their own national governments, the Guiding Principles should be used alongside international refugee, human rights and humanitarian law to ensure that returning refugees are received "in a safe, dignified and humane manner and with full respect for human rights in accordance with obligations under international law", as stated in CRRF article 11.b.

Second, we call on States, UN agencies and their partners to expand and coordinate the collection of interoperable data that covers the entire displacement continuum, from internal displacement to refuge abroad and repatriation/return.

Informed planning across sectors on sustainable return and reintegration, as called for in CRRF article 12, cannot move forward without data that takes the specific needs of returnees into account and so engages more decisively with IDPs. This means monitoring returnees' trajectories over time, not just at drop-off but much further into their settlement and reintegration process, and gathering data on a range of indicators that benchmark progress towards durable solutions systematically, comprehensively and in ways that are collaborative and interoperable.

A strict separation of IDP and returnee populations is inadequate for both data and protection purposes, and impedes efforts toward achieving durable solutions.

The inclusion of returning refugees in national policy on internal displacement would improve the chances of sustainable return and help prevent future displacement through national protection. This also supports UNHCR's own commitment to work across the entire spectrum of displacement and build stronger and more systematic linkages between its refugee and IDP responses across the continuum of forced displacement.

As stated in the open letter by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and high level co-signatories to the Members ahead last year's September Summit on Refugees and Migrants, "it would be a great failure of humanity to limit whom we help based on lines on a map. Our work is guided by humanity and humanity has no borders.

We urge governments, world leaders, thought leaders and the public to unite behind this cause. We should come together next year to propose better ways to prevent internal displacement and support the invisible majority of displaced people. Until then, we also call on leaders and members of the public to keep the spotlight of our compassion on the internally displaced, alongside refugees and migrants.

Thank you.