



UNHCR ExCom Side Event
The Future of Action on Internal Displacement: NGO Perspectives
Friday 18th October 2024
8:30-9:45

Summary

Moderated by:

- Ms. Reshma Adatia, Director of Engagement, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

Opening Remarks (via video message):

- Mr. Jan Egeland, Secretary General, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

Speakers:

- Ms. Nimo Hassan, Director, Somali NGO Consortium and ICVA Chair
- Mr. Stephan Maurer, Geneva Representative, Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- Ms. Amanda Rives, Senior Director for External Engagement and Resource Development, World Vision International
- Mr. Ayad Mahdi, from ASF NGO in Yemen – *unable to travel*
- NRC in-person representative: Ms. Caelin Briggs, Head of Interagency Coordination and Protection Policy.

Attendees:

- Australia, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Madagascar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, United States, Zimbabwe
- European Union, World Bank
- African Initiative for Relief and Development (AIRD), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Church World Service, International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, International Federation of Social Workers, Jesuit Refugee Council, Middle East Durable Solutions Platform, Newcomers with Disabilities in Sweden, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), World Vision International, Act Alliance
- Various UNHCR colleagues (approx. 20) including from the IDP team, DIP PPLA and community-based protection team, DER PCS, and Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements.
- Representatives from the Office of the Special Advisor (3) on Solutions for IDPs, including the SA Robert Piper.

Opening Remarks Jan England:

- Over the past five years, **there have been a series of initiatives aimed at addressing the plight of internally displaced persons and helping promote more predictable solutions** to displacement.
 - These initiatives started when **57 of you, Member States, called on the UN Secretary General** to do something about this problem.
 - The Secretary General agreed to convene a **High-Level Panel** on Internal Displacement, and then developed his own **Action Agenda on Internal Displacement** based on the Panel's findings and recommendations.



- Building on the Action Agenda, a **UN Special Adviser** was appointed to support solutions, and a **review was undertaken to look at how to improve humanitarian responses** to internal displacement.
- These were important processes, but as we approach the end of 2024, many of them are coming to a close.
- We can't ignore the numbers of people living in internal displacement has grown by 20 million over just the past four years alone. At the end of 2023, **75.9 million people were living in situations of internal displacement**.

Ms. Reshma Adatia, Director of Engagement, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), opening remarks:

- We are here on the margins of ExCom, so let me focus on the role of UNHCR specifically. We were **very pleased to see UNHCR's new Strategic Plan on IDPs**. UNHCR has always been the champion for protection, rights, and solutions for refugees. **We need UNHCR to also be a champion for IDPs** – even where it is hard (especially where it is hard). UNHCR's strategic plan offers a blueprint for how they can do this, which we welcome and will support.
- UNHCR also cannot and should not have to do it alone. **They need your support, as their Executive Committee**. And they also need the rest of the system to pull together to protect and support IDPs. This is what the Centrality of Protection is about: working together to achieve real outcomes for IDPs and other populations in crisis.
- **As we heard from NRC, the key now is action. We need to put our learnings from the past four years into practice**. This will take all of us: UNHCR, the member states in the room, and NGOs working together.

Question to Nimo Hassan, Director, Somali NGO Consortium: How can we maintain the momentum around internal displacement, leverage government engagement, and further deepen our collective efforts to improve outcomes for IDPs?

Nimo Hassan remarks:

- It is important that we maintain the momentum, leverage government , and improve outcomes for IDPs. The geopolitical tensions, funding decline and rising xenophobia is building walls rather than bridges. We need to reemphasize our collective commitment to place IDPs at the heart of our global action. A more locally led action with urgency, and where ensuring voices, capacities and expertise of local actors are acknowledged and truly valued.
- The challenge is to sustain the momentum. How to keep it at the forefront of national international agendas. We need to leverage government and stronger partnership to:
 - Align policies with realities on the ground, improve coordination and aligning action
 - Support participation, empower local communities, active participants in shaping their future – self-reliance, reduce dependency, vocational training, programmes that focus on livelihoods.
 - Scaling up resources to address and find lasting solutions to these issues
 - Move locally-led approaches from rhetoric to practices
 - Strengthen community accountability feedback, citizen oversight, forums
 - Align intervention with government development goals and enhance coordination amongst government agencies: whole of government approach
 - Strengthen sharing of learning and capacities as a two-way street for fostering mutual growth and understanding crucial to value knowledge and expertise of local communities.

Question to Stephan Maurer, Geneva Representative, Danish Refugee Council (DRC): Have there been successes in operationalizing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus that we can build upon? How do we better leverage the capacities of dual-mandated organizations and local actors?



Stephan Maurer remarks:

- Reference to interventions in Eastern Cameroon and the Central African Republic (CAR). In CAR, there are 1M IDPs and refugees. Funded by EU, US (20M for 4 years, nexus programming). Includes food distribution, training for women on healthcare, water distribution, youth training, rehabilitation, ID cards distributed, support to vulnerable groups such as older people.
- To look at nexus you need to look beyond the headlines of bad news – preconditions are good for nexus programming. All that is needed for the nexus is pockets of peace.
- Criteria to find and identify projects like that: you need to have a counterpart to engage with, a government really willing to engage in solutions and nexus, and a certain stability.
- We need flexible, long-term funding, multiyear funding that allows us to engage in livelihoods. Multi-year funding results in a very different kind of intervention.
- Direct aid to the most vulnerable, relieves pressures and builds resilience, and trained in conflict resolution. Flexible long-term funding and distributions don't contradict each other.
- Listening to the people of concern is another crucial point– need to adapt these approaches to the needs of the community.
- Government, all levels (national regional) needs to be engaged.
- Project of cooperation with LNGOs and INGOs. Refugees, IDPs and host communities are all targeted, not based on status. It is important to deploy particular efforts to include youth and the elderly.
- The key lesson from this is that it is not so difficult to identify locations for this kind of interventions to materialize if there are some pre-conditions.

Question to Amanda Rives, Senior Director for External Engagement and Resource Development, World Vision International: How can we better respond and promote solutions to internal displacement in challenging contexts, such as urban environments, hard-to-reach areas, and countries facing severe governance challenges?

Amanda Rives remarks:

- World Vision has a significant presence in countries affected by internal displacement, and in many instances, we have been there well before the crisis or the trigger that generated the displacement. What we are seeing is that conflict and climate-change-induced disaster more frequently intersect, including in urban contexts, which may pose specific protection and child protection challenges. We also increasingly operate in spaces lacking democratic institutions, with weak rule of law, in restricted environments
- The way internal displacement is approached from the inception of a crisis may have longer-term effects on the availability of durable solutions later on; as such, it is crucial to take a longer-term perspective from the beginning of a crisis. In this perspective, supporting the inclusion of national and local governments efforts, where possible, and equitable partnership with local and national actors, including capacity sharing, are important approaches to be integrated into a medium-term response strategy.
- Sudan: access challenges in some areas, and need to adapt different modalities. Capacity sharing with local actors is key. Mobile registration of beneficiaries and support to local actors' capacity, so that when peace is reached move to nexus programming.
- In Afghanistan, we see an erosion of development funding, which stretches humanitarian actors. In this context, displacement seems to be increasingly driven by the compounding effects of economic collapse, climate shocks, and eroded resilience. In this context, we support response and solutions by taking a systemic approach to food insecurity based on intersectoral and multisectoral programming, whole-nexus thinking, and robust partnership with rigorous contextualisation, local leadership, and AAP. Equitable partnering is again at the centre of this approach, programming is cross sectoral, and partner NGOs complement each other with their own specific strengths (geographical/sectoral), creating multipliers and with gender and social cohesion thoroughly integrated. In essence, this could be described as a



modest step towards area-based programming, the next phase of which will have a stronger focus on education and vocational training.

- In Lebanon, highest per capita rate of refugees and IDPs and exceptional level of solidarity and remarkable resilience. In this case a pre-planning process helps a more rapid efficient response.

Question to all panellists: What are your final thoughts on the way forward, or any recommendations you may have for member states or UNHCR?

Nimo Hassan remarks:

- There is an urgency in which we move, and we need to put localization at the heart of our response. It is difficult for practitioners, and more difficult when donors have different envelopes and levels of funding— but in there ultimately no difference for communities
- We must strengthen multistakeholder coordination and the nexus is an important part of us delivering a whole response approach. There must be equity, and including voices of local partners.
- We must align our interventions with global development goals and have a holistic approach to the nexus.

Stephan Maurer remarks:

- We must focus on where it is feasible and possible to focus on long term solutions. There are pockets where durable, nexus, approaches is possible. Governments need to be on board (including all their nuances as they are not unified blocs).
- We need to have long term planning in mind from the onset of a crisis. Take stock and demands of those coordinating response, are we going in the direction of sustainable programming?
- For us NGOs, this translates into an obligation and an effort to represent people of concern. They need to be asked what they want, and we need to speak loud and clear if they cannot speak themselves.
- Relevant links:
 - [MIDDLE EAST: Improving the Response to Internal Displacement | DRC Danish Refugee Council](#)
 - [Solutions from the Start: Adapting the Deliverables for Humanitarian Country Teams to Ensure Better Outcomes for Internally Displaced Persons: Rodgers Hemsley WP43-Final.pdf](#)
 - [HPC - Project Module: View Project](#)

Amanda Rives remarks:

There are few key elements that will determine the success of our collective action on internal displacement moving forward, and they primarily revolve around leadership, collaboration, and participation.

- At global level, humanitarian leadership, including by the new Emergency Relief Coordinator and the other IASC Principals, will have quite a role to play in ensuring that things like the IASC management response to the independent review of the humanitarian responses to internal displacement, but also the implementation of OCHA's IDP policy, translate into tangible action. This need for strong leadership in this area exists also at country level, in the role that the HC/RCs and the HCTs will play. The same goes for the UNHCR Strategic Plan for Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People. Overall, we'll need steady leadership to keep solutions to internal displacement a priority. We also need a leadership that can advocate strategically, keep the political attention on, and continue to engage constructively with donors and other constituencies, including the NGO community.



- It will be crucial to keep investing in healthy and constructive collaboration frameworks, spaces, and practices, and equitable partnership amongst local, national and international actors. This needs to span across the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus. Local and national actors need to be at the steering wheel of a locally-led action that recognizes that every entity has a contribution to make to the system and is part of the solution.
- Importance of enabling and supporting IDPs participation, empowerment, voice, and the recognition of their agency and steer of the process. As a child-focused agency, we believe in the transformative power of safe and meaningful child participation, and we believe that the voices, priorities, and perspective of children and communities should be at the centre of our collective efforts towards durable solutions.
- Of course, leadership, collaboration, and participation should be underpinned by predictable and quality funding, that support resilience and self-reliance and is flexible enough to allow actors to be responsive to rapidly evolving situations on the ground.

Statements from the floor:

IDMC

- Event is timely, internal displacement, in particular solutions, has benefited from unprecedented attention in the last 5 years, since the establishment of high-level panel. Concern about visibility cliff and loss of momentum
- Action Agenda is open-ended, Special Advisor coming to a close but need continued commitment
- Welcome the strong participation of NGOs in the IASC Independent Review of Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement. Hope equally strong participation in post-OSA arrangements.
- Government leadership is essential, different components (knowledge, capacity and will)

South Sudan

- Displacement is unique, caused by 2 hazards. In spite of efforts by IOM and other partners, people are not getting proper means to reintegrate their communities.
- 6/10 states are flooded and population displaced.
- Needs are still huge and as such make an appeal donors, members to assist government of South Sudan for durable solution and reintegration in their communities.

Middle East Durable Solution Platform

- ME NGOs are concerned that Syrians crossing into Syria to flee violence in Lebanon were classified as returnees in the opening speech of the UNHCR High Commissioner, i.a. because international aid actors' policies and programming for returnees are very different from policies and programming for people who are seeking protection, e.g. they recognise that those people still have the right to seek protection outside of their country of origin
- urgent call to action from UNHCR and partners:
 - to recognise that certain changes are not subject to (geo)politics or funding restrictions but only depend on the endogenous reach and power of UNHCR and partners
 - to focus on making those changes to the system that ensure that best practices like locally led action, the centrality of protection, working on solutions from the start, are implemented
 - to ensure that the proposed systems change includes clear accountability structures, e.g. by holding HCTs responsible for producing a deliverable that includes a risk analysis and mapping of the prerequisites for durable solutions that are under threat in the first 12 months



after their inception, and by including an action plan for the meaningful inclusion of affected populations and the locally led actors that represent them in this deliverable

Special Advisor, Rober Piper

- Momentum, in two big pieces is giving new confidence
- New generation of solutions plan written by governments (Nigeria Somalia, Iraq, Ethiopia, and others such as Colombia and Mozambique) is weeks away of launching.
- Breakthrough: we are understanding about getting solutions right from the start. Camps, investing in education, livelihoods, protecting documentation this leads to a self-reliance and solutions pathway.
- We have a kind of doctrines of how to get things right.
- Pathways is super clear.
- Office closing but thankful for organisations who did the big lift

Ethiopia

- Lessons from SA office, huge impact in two years.
- Lack of coordination for NGOs and international organisations is a challenge – everyone doing things in different places. How much of your work supports the essence of government to bring solutions, how you work with governments.

NRC

- Today is a call for action. More consensus now around this agenda. Only achieved if working jointly. We have foundations but quite a lot left to be done. Understand in granularity in practices to have solutions from day one. UNHCR – continued leadership on how to maintain this protection lens as we move forward. Importance of engaging in a multistakeholder way with involvement NGO and a seat at the table.

Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS)

- Coalition of 14 NGOs informing durable solution approaches, in East Africa, Hornor of Africa and Great Lakes region.
- Agreed there is momentum and greater consensus, and these are important shifts. However, reinforced that shifts to longer-term approaches are challenging and complex. Called for flexible transitional financial mechanisms, and interventions that build bridges to support the most vulnerable take full advantage of investments in stronger systems and services. Also reinforced the need for emphasis on learning and impact, and a hard look at whether coordination mechanisms are in place to support this.
- Need for a change in focus to address *barriers* to solutions, not only needs. Many of these are complex, requiring policy change and political engagement, which necessitates a collective understanding of what barriers exist and a clear collective strategy of *how* to address them.
- Reinforced the participation of affected populations, without which we will fail to effectively navigate shifts in approaches, and risk leaving behind the most vulnerable – for example, that gendered approaches and disability inclusion become de-prioritized.

UNHCR DHC Kelly Clements

- Full commitment to this agenda, energetic approach to IASC review and share optimism, energetic champion in moving forward with this issue.

United States

- Sustainable programming is very easy to be destroyed very quickly without peace. Need to consider inside the camps.

Somalia



- IDP act, to be adopted by parliament based on Kampala convention. A portion of gov budget goes to ppl of concern. Shows commitment of gov to deal with their own issues, and hopefully implemented by 2026.

Cameroon

- UNHCR is active, but need multistakeholder approach that deals with IDPs. Invite DRC and NRC to be part of this platform. How can we support in efforts to collaborate?

Danish Refugee Council

- We collaborate well with government, and for project implementation, administration are very supportive.

Sudan

- The government must be involved from the beginning, is key from project design and to the phase out of the project. Must address the root causes of displacement, if not addressed within the design of the project, then the project is useless.