

Note
Action-Oriented Approaches to Solutions for Internally Displaced People
Side Event at UNHCR's EXCOM - 07 October 2020

UNHCR organized a Side Event concerning *Action-Oriented Approaches to Solutions for Internally Displaced People* on 07 October 2020, during the 71st session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (EXCOM). Moderated by Raouf Mazou, UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, the event included presentations from four esteemed panelists, followed by questions and recommendations from Member States and non-governmental partners present in the audience:

1. Ms. **Lina el-Sheikh Mahjoub**, Honourable Minister of Labour and Social Development, Republic of the Sudan
2. Mr. **Per Heggenes**, CEO, IKEA Foundation
3. Ms. **Mariam Alsulaimani**, Advocate on IDP rights, Iraq
4. **Ms. Marie-Laure Akin-Olugbade**, Director General for the West Africa Region, the African Development Bank

This note attempts to capture the concepts presented and reflective analysis useful to stakeholders in their efforts to advance action-oriented solutions for internally displaced persons. Recommendations following from the discussion include:

- 1) **Embrace IDPs within national pandemic recovery actions:** The vast disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was cited by several of the panelists, including as related to the health concern of individuals and communities, and the devastating socio-economic impact. The need for area-based response programming was emphasized as an important approach to address the impact of the pandemic on both IDPs and hosts. Also referenced was the possibility for a national and global "reset" – a historic window of opportunity where States are redefining national priorities and widescale economic stimulus is being applied, and where IDP solutions efforts can move forward embedded within historic national recovery programming. States around the world are now developing (1) pandemic impact studies and (2) national response plans, in collaboration with UNDP. Suggestion is made to take immediate action to include IDPs, and location hosting IDPs, within these impact assessments, to also ensure that "no-one is left behind" during the pandemic response programming.
- 2) **Ensure IDP access to civil documentation and livelihoods:** As stressed by Mariam Alsulaimani, the IDP representative from Iraq, the possession of civil documentation and livelihoods are central to the return to normal life. Ms. Alsulaimani shared her own obstacles as a displaced woman without access to civil documentation, including challenges in accessing services, livelihoods including the ability to open small businesses, and the risk of arbitrary detention.

Moreover, without civil documentation, it is difficult to exercise political rights, to move freely, and to access services including education and health. As an action-oriented approach, States may be advised to (i) adopt simplified administrative procedures for IDPs and, where appropriate, integrate civil documentation with other assistance activities (ii) carry out regular awareness campaigns or community outreach activities (iii) put in place measures, as appropriate, to ensure that rural or remote locations are reached, such as through, for example, mobile registration units; (iv) waive documentation related fees and penalties for internally displaced people (v) request technical and other types of assistance, if required, from other States, UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as civil society and regional organizations.

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- 3) **Ensure participation of IDPs in planning and implementation of solutions.** As drawn out by several panelists, consultations with IDPs, affected communities, and local leaders (both from the State administration as well as from customary and traditional authorities), must directly inform durable solutions programming. This is evident in Sudan through durable solutions efforts supported by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), - a best actionable practice which must be undertaken in any IDP setting.

Further to this, effort is needed to support **IDP's participation in electoral and political processes**. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 concerns peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all, and effective and accountable institutions. Electoral participation by IDPs is, however, a challenging undertaking, both politically and technically. Participation is also an important step towards sustainable reintegration and can act as a means of reconciliation in divided societies.

As the action-oriented approach, a study on the possible modalities for IDP participation in national elections may be advised, identifying any security concerns or potential risks to the integrity of the process, as well as mitigating measures. The result of this study can be shared as a guidance note for consideration by national authorities.

- 4) **Support the Private Sector to have a larger role:** The role of the private sector, and in particular the local private sector, in advancing IDP solutions was intensively discussed during the event. As stated, when making decisions to invest and/or engage in IDP situations, the private sector seeks to understand the local, regional and national regulatory framework, as well as the political stability and security situation, and the Government position to developing opportunities. There is also a need to understand the skills level for IDPs and the host communities. Data was noted as critical, to enable companies to develop their business case and to understand the business opportunities in the area, and population skillsets. As an action-oriented approach, there is a need for all stakeholders to come together, share information and collaborate to create conditions conducive for investors with a long-term focus. Platforms for this collaboration are needed but are not yet established.
- 5) **Invest in livelihoods for win-win IDP and host empowerment:** As stated by several panelists, the objective is to move persons away from dependence on aid and to self-reliance, regardless of displacement. Livelihood development is key, and collaboration is needed to build local economies. There is a requirement for all partners to come together, and different partners can offer different support. The Private Sector can create jobs, which leads to sustainable solutions, including local businesses in the communities and in the region, as well as national and international opportunities. As the action-oriented approach, there is a need to support the development of entrepreneurship and enable small businesses to scale-up to where they can create more jobs. Persons may need start-up or management support to enable them to thrive. Financial institutions can provide loans and fiscal incentives to make it practical for private sector to engage. Aspects of this perspective was cited by representatives of both the African Development Bank and the Ikea Foundation in their comments.
- 6) **Urban displacement and the search for solutions.** Highlighted during the event, urban displacement also offers opportunities supporting interim solutions for many IDPs if authorities and the international community support them in their efforts to live dignified lives while retaining the prospect of eventual return or relocation elsewhere. As the action-oriented approach, this can be done through greater promotion of local solutions, interim integration or transitional solutions, to facilitate the appropriate economic, social and cultural inclusion of IDPs, provided without prejudice to eventually more durable solutions. This also means better identifying and removing the barriers

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that prevent IDPs from benefiting and contributing to the social, political, economic and cultural life of towns and cities, including through expanding livelihoods, health, water, infrastructure, and education capacity.

- 7) **Support national capacity, including as related to COVID response** – in her intervention, Marie-Laure Akin-Olugbade, the Director General for the West Africa Region, the African Development Bank, highlighted on-going work to allow the Governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger to strengthen their national capacity to stop the spread of COVID-19 and limit its social and economic impact in a region where the pandemic is causing an unprecedented emergency on top of multiple crises, including internal displacement. The response will prioritize activities in areas most impacted by conflict and violence, with a high concentration of forcibly displaced people and limited presence of government institutions.
- 8) **Sanctions as barriers to speeding IDP solutions:** In her intervention, Lina el-Sheikh Mahjoub, the Honourable Minister of Labour and Social Development from the Government of Sudan, stated that legacy sanctions imposed against the past regime are a “key barrier” which have “a crippling effect”, including by prohibiting access to “financing, international markets and technologies”. This in turn complicates long-term recovery efforts to support returning communities, including by stunting economies, and limiting investments in basic services.

Sanctions are blunt instruments which tend to be faster to introduce than to lift. As the action-oriented response, the impact of sanctions on IDP solutions efforts in post conflict settings needs to be better understood. A context specific study is needed, with a view towards making recommendations for mitigating measures. Further to this, this context specific study could take the form of an impact statement and call for a humanitarian exception which would allow for IDP solutions efforts to move forward at locations, such as Sudan, where legacy sanctions are burdening transitional authorities.

In September 2020, UNHCR released the paper titled “Unlocking Solutions for the Internally Displaced”, which was an additional submission to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement¹. Shared as background reading for this side event, the paper also focuses on action-oriented ways in which solutions opportunities for internally displaced people can be advanced in contemporary settings. Practical and recent examples of solutions implementation by UNHCR and partners are as well included in our second quarterly update on *UNHCR's Initiative on Internal Displacement*². Solutions are at the centre of the UNHCR response in internal displacement settings, as mandated by our *Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Internal Displacement Settings*.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

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¹ https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/sites/www.un.org.internal-displacement-panel/files/unlocking_solutions_for_idps_additional_submission_to_the_high_level_panel_final_30.09.20.pdf

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/idp-initiative-quarterly-update-september-2020>