



Terms of Reference

For the Development Policy Paper

The role of political will in development and peace responses to forced displacement

OECD (Development Co-operation Directorate, and Development Centre); UNU Centre for Policy Research

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recent policy developments have provided the framework for responses to refugee and IDP situations across the spectrum of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus. However, while there is momentum at the global policy level on development responses to forced displacement, and on the benefits of socio-economic inclusion of refugees and IDPs – reflected, for example, in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) - differences remain in host country policy and practice. Whilst some host countries are very open to integrating those who are forcibly displaced, recognising the importance of local integration for development, social cohesion and in meeting international commitments to “leave no-one behind”, others face challenges in translating global policy commitments into national policy and practice. There are also important differences between what is stated in policy and what actually happens on the ground. For example, a recent baseline study on social protection for refugees and IDPs found a significant implementation gap between national policies for the inclusion of refugees and IDPs and actual access and coverage in practice (OECD Development Policy Paper No. 43, 2022). One of the key factors identified was the political economy of the hosting context, and the prevalence (or lack) of political will to systematically integrate refugees and IDPs into national systems.

This development policy project focuses on the sensitive space of the political economy of refugee hosting context in low- and middle- income countries (LMICs), and examines the importance of political will for shaping development and peace responses to refugee and IDP situations. It explores the role of political will in facilitating solutions to forced displacement. It also examines how political barriers shape responses to forced displacement across the HDP Nexus, and maps out the roles of “development actors” and “peace actors” in mobilising political will towards the best possible policy responses in the context.

This development policy project is jointly managed by the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate, the OECD Development Centre, and the UN University Centre for Policy Research. It forms part of the DAC INCAF (International Network on Conflict and Fragility) work-stream on forced displacement, and will contribute to the delivery of the GCR and to the UN Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. The findings and key recommendations will be presented in related policy dialogues and international fora, including through a joint OECD-UNU-CPR migration policy seminar (July 2023) and at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) scheduled to take place in December 2023.

2. CONTEXT

Forced displacement situation

The number of forcibly displaced persons has been in constant rise over the last two decades. Even before the 2022 Russian aggression on Ukraine, forced displacement world-wide reached

unprecedented levels, with over 95 million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2021¹ (UNHCR, 2022[63]) (IDMC, 2022[64]). This includes over 36 million refugees and asylum seekers, and 59 million conflict and disaster IDPs. By mid-2021, low and middle income countries (LMICs) were hosting over 80% of the world's refugee population. In light of the war on Ukraine, the extent of forced displacement has surpassed the 100 million mark in 2022, making forced displacement a key issue for international co-operation on fragility and development.

The refugee context has changed over the past two decades. 60% of refugees now live in urban areas outside of refugee settlements (World Refugee Council, 2018). Protracted displacement is the norm for the majority of refugees and IDPs. According to UNHCR, “durable solutions have ... become an option for fewer and fewer refugees and internally displaced, and are far outpaced by the rising numbers of people forced to flee” (UNHCR, 2022[63]). Some 74% of all refugees have been in displacement for longer than five years, in 51 “protracted situations” in 31 countries. In 2021, fewer than 488,000 refugees were able to return to their country of origin or be resettled to a third country, and very few were able to naturalise in the host country (UNHCR, 2022[63]). While the data is more obscure for internal displacement, examples of situational evidence give an indication of the severity of protracted internal displacement: 56% of Sudan’s IDPs have been displaced for longer than 10 years, and 80% of Syrian IDPs have been displaced for more than five years (IDMC, 2022[64]). At the same time, according to UNHCR, there has been some positive progress on solutions for the internally displaced, with 5.3 million people returning home in 2021 (UNHCR, 2022[63]).

Policies on forced displacement

The recognition that forced displacement is not solely a humanitarian, but also very much a longer-term development and peace issue, is reflected in recent global frameworks. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, aim “to reach the furthest behind first” and to “leave no one behind”, which includes displaced populations. The GCR, adopted in 2018, calls for pursuing integrated responses among the humanitarian, development, and peace dimensions to support refugees in rebuilding their lives (United Nations, 2016; UNHCR, 2018). In 2019, the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) of the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) adopted a Common Position on comprehensive refugee responses. The Common Position reaffirms that refugee situations require a political and programmatic approach that includes humanitarian assistance, development, and peace interventions from the outset of a crisis (DAC INCAF, 2019). The report of the UN Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement (UN, 2021) calls for making solutions for IDPs a nationally owned, whole-of-Government priority, and for embedding a development approach to internal displacement. In the light of such global commitments, related policy instruments are increasingly being developed by DAC members, other donors and their partners, reflecting the objectives of the HDP Nexus (Gagnon and Rodrigues, 2020).

¹ For the purpose of this project, the term “refugee” is not limited to its specific legal definition, but also includes asylum seekers who may or may not be refugees, refugees under UNRWA mandate, and individuals in refugee-like situations, such as Venezuelans displaced abroad, and individuals benefiting from temporary protection measures. The specific data for all aforementioned population categories is based on UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2021. For IDP population statistics, the data is sourced from the IDMC Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) 2022 (referring to IDP statistics of the year 2021), and includes both conflict and disaster IDPs.

Across recent policy developments, the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations in broader development planning, and in national socio-economic systems, has emerged as an important element of the national and international response, with the potential to benefit both the hosting communities and the forcibly displaced themselves. Conditions and capacities permitting, and with the right policy approach, forcibly displaced populations can contribute productively to the local economy. When managed carefully and with political and societal sensitivity, both host community members and forcibly displaced populations can benefit from economic and social development, including from the development support to education, health, and social protection systems. This requires that refugees, and also IDPs, are integrated into national development strategies and plans, rather than being treated as a separate population requiring special policy and programmatic responses, as is currently mostly the case.

Policy change towards socio-economic integration of refugees and IDPs can make a big difference in addressing protracted displacement. The initial drivers of forced displacement may be intractable in certain contexts, thereby rendering return and reintegration unfeasible in the short, medium, and possibly the longer term. The displaced themselves may also have intentions not to return, especially in protracted situations. Socio-economic integration becomes a pragmatic “practical” solution.

Development strategies and plans

National development and sector plans in LMICs constitute an important tool for a country to express its own development priorities. These plans form the basis for mobilising related international development resources, and for coordinating the support efforts by the international donor community in the country. National development and sector plans are typically costed and resourced from fiscal and/or development finance resources. International donor development co-operation strategies, including regional strategies, constitute a reflection of the priorities by donors for the utilisation of their official development assistance (ODA) resources, in terms of themes and prioritisation. UN development co-operation frameworks also support national development strategies and offer the capacities, resources and insights of UN agencies operating in the country to advance national development priorities. Theories of change suggest that the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in national development plans unlocks the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in bilateral and multilateral development responses and related financing.

Political will and the HDP nexus

The DAC Recommendation on the HDP nexus (OECD, 2019) provided for DAC members and UN adherents a global call for a new way of working, by bringing the synergies and complementarities of three sets of actors, namely humanitarian, development and peace actors, to work on common long-term goals.

Development and peace interventions are inherently political. Ultimately, they depend on the host country’s authorities and societies perspective on the forced displacement situation. Through political dialogue, development co-operation, and humanitarian assistance, international actors can have an important and constructive role in accompanying national political will and societal acceptance towards the best possible policy response to forced displacement. This project explores the role of political will in development and peace responses to forced displacement. It examines ways of creating the policy space, political will, and ultimately solutions for protracted forced displacement situations.

3. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, AND SCOPE

While extensive technical policies, standards, and good practises on forced displacement are available, the role of the political economy and political will in shaping policy responses to forced displacement is underexplored. This development policy project specifically explores the importance of political will for the following objectives:

1. Socio-economic integration of refugees and IDPs in the host country, supported by inclusion of refugees and IDPs in bilateral and multi-lateral development co-operation programmes. International development co-operation is inherently more political than humanitarian aid.
2. Solutions to end forced displacement, with particular focus on return and reintegration, local settlement at the location of displacement, and settlement elsewhere in the country.
3. Achieving policy coherence between host countries and development co-operation partners.

Towards these three objectives, it will:

- Provide a definition of ‘political will’ that can be employed for understanding barriers and opportunities to the implementation of policy commitments at the national and sub-national level;
- Define, identify and map the actors and their responsibilities, who contribute to the development and maintenance, or otherwise, of political will for effective policy implementation;
- Examine how political will has affected and shaped policy responses to forced displacement across in low and middle income countries (LMICs) hosting at least 400,000 forcibly displaced (refugees and IDPs combined);
- Undertake a detailed review of a limited number of LMICs to better understand the particular configuration of historical, economic, political and other factors that shape policy responses to forced displacement; and
- Provide policy recommendations on how political will can be mobilised and sustained to address the policy challenges associated with socio-economic integration of refugees and IDPs, and solutions to end displacement. Recommendations will be broken down by the different actors concerned.

Key questions to be answered:

- What do we mean by ‘political will’ in the context of forced displacement and the HDP nexus? How is political will relevant for development and peace responses to forced displacement?

- How does political will shape/undermine/support national and sub-national policy responses to forced migration in LMICs? How does political will shape the extent of inclusion of refugees and IDPs in bilateral and multi-lateral development co-operation strategies, priorities and financing? How can we ensure policy coherence between host countries and development partners?
- What is the role of “peace actors” and “development actors” in mobilising political will to deliver improved outcomes for refugees and IDPs?
- How can the mobilisation and maintenance of political will be operationalised?
- What are the specific factors shaping the political economy and barriers to and opportunities for building political will in 3-4 countries?

The project will comprise four phases:

1. Literature and policy review;
2. Key informant interviews, possibly deep dive studies of three or four hosting contexts
3. Drafting of the report
4. Dissemination and engagement with the report’s findings

6. DELIVERABLES

1. Joint OECD and UNU-CPR development policy paper
2. UNU-CPR and OECD migration policy seminar to discuss draft report (July 2023)
3. Dissemination of findings (DAC-INCAF, HC’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges (Dec. 2022 – preliminary findings), Global Refugee Forum 2023, UN Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, DAC INCAF)

7. MANAGEMENT

This project constitutes a collaboration between the OECD DAC Network on International Crisis and Fragility (INCAF), the OECD Development Centre (DEV), and the UN University Centre for Policy Research (UNU-CPR). The project is jointly managed by Jens Hesemann (Senior Policy Advisor, on loan from UNHCR to the OECD, DCD) Jason Gagnon (Head, Migration and Skills Unit, OECD DEV Centre) and Heaven Crawley (Head of Equitable Development and Migration, UNU-CPR). The co-authors of the development policy paper will be Heaven Crawley, Jason Gagnon, and Jens Hesemann.

8. TIMELINE

The overall time required to complete this project is 14 months. The project will be completed in time for the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023.

	July-Sept 2022	Oct-Dec 2022	Jan-Mar 2023	April-June 2023	Aug-Sept 2023	Oct-Dec 2023
Phase 1 Literature and policy review						
Phase 2 Review of country policies						
Phase 3 Key informant interviews						
Phase 4 Report writing						
Phase 5 Engagement and dissemination						
Phase 6 Publication						

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