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Responding to Protracted Displacement Using the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Approach: Scoping Study



November 2020



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Responding to Protracted Displacement Using the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Approach: Scoping Study

November 2020

Executive Summary

This scoping study has been commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to inform the development of a Theory of Change (ToC; UNRISD 2020) that illustrates the potential for their interventions, based on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus, to work toward longer-term solutions and to reinforce, strategic collaboration in situations of forced displacement in low- and middle-income countries. Contexts vary so target populations might, for example, include refugees and asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and stateless persons alongside host populations. The study was conducted by the United Nations Research Institute for Sustainable Development (UNRISD) between March and June 2020 and is based on a desk review and remote individual or group discussions with 50 people from UNDP, UNHCR and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Key Findings

Displacement

The growing size of displaced and protracted displaced populations caused by an increasing number of prolonged conflicts and crises has precipitated a renewed emphasis on comprehensive responses that combine humanitarian, development and peace activities in an effort to prevent and mitigate the impact of forced displacement.

The international legal framework and guidelines to protect displaced groups provide protection, access to rights and assistance. Refugees have greater protection under international law than other displaced groups. How the legal framework is implemented depends on the status of the displaced group and the attitude of the host government and population. The legal framework underpins all interventions in response to displacement and should be mobilized through all sectoral responses to protected populations and enable them to access their rights.

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an important framework for UNDP and UNHCR interventions into situations of forced displacement. They advocate a holistic approach drawing on the HDP nexus and stress the need to prevent crises from occurring as well as the need to address their impact and to support the development of national systems and governance.

The majority of displaced populations are hosted in low- and middle-income countries. The SDGs and the GCR emphasize the need for global partnerships to share responsibilities among developed and developing countries in addressing needs and mitigating the impact of crises, including forced displacement.

There is a lack of qualitative and quantitative data and analysis to inform policy and practice and to monitor and evaluate interventions. Little research is conducted to provide in-depth insights into situations of protracted displacement and the impact on displaced populations and their hosts.

The HDP nexus

The rationale for and practice of linking humanitarian, development and peace interventions are not new and present challenges including fears of compromising humanitarian principles and space; and difficulties in coordinating and working across sectors because of different working practices, expertise, planning horizons and access to funding. Planning, sequencing and coordinating complex interventions in dynamic situations with large numbers of actors that have different agendas and objectives is time consuming and demands strong working relationships and mutual trust. Maintaining agility and flexibility to respond to changing circumstances when implementing large-scale, multisectoral interventions is problematic.

Despite the interest in the triple nexus approach and the apparent logic in addressing the humanitarian, development and peace issues surrounding protracted displacement simultaneously, there are few examples of success, and limited specific guidance on programmatic design and content for implementing the nexus.

The role of governments in HDP nexus approaches is unclear.

The scope of the peace pillar is yet to be agreed. Some argue that the peace pillar should focus on “soft” interventions only, such as social cohesion, governance and rule of law (RoL). Others argue that the peace pillar should be broader and include “hard” interventions such as security sector reform (SSR); disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); and militarized peacekeeping efforts. The agreed scope of the peace pillar has implications for funding and coordination mechanisms to implement the triple nexus.

While many of the challenges and unknowns remain, the United Nations, its partners, and UNDP and UNHCR have made structural changes to break down the barriers between their humanitarian, development and peace interventions; created new coordination mechanisms; and instigated systems of information sharing, capacity development and sharing of expertise and research. For example, the UN Secretary-General’s Reform Agenda, the New Ways of Working (NWoW) initiative and the creation of the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration (JSC) are designed to improve coordination and shared understanding. UNDP and UNHCR have developed a joint action plan, initiated staff exchanges and made specific commitments to the SDGs, the GCR and to working toward long-term solutions to protracted displacement.

Although donors have revised funding mechanisms to fund HDP nexus approaches more effectively, new instruments and initiatives often complicate oversight of funding availability and distribution, and

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