

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT - THE DRC PERSPECTIVE



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Displacement is at an all-time high, with nearly 60 million people displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or human rights violations. As the world grapples with the current refugee and migrant crisis in Europe –in which over 900,000 refugees and migrants have made perilous journeys over sea and across land, it is critical that **our focus turns to address the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration.**



Whereas this focus is not new, there is now a greater impetus and momentum for this dialogue.

Firstly, because an increasing number of displacement situations around the world are protracted and complex, owing to the lack of political resolution of conflicts. Case examples include: Central African Republic (CAR), Syria, South Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan and Yemen.

Secondly, displaced populations experience secondary and multiple displacements due to a deteriorating quality of asylum. This includes a lack of capacity of hosting states to provide essential

services like adequate housing, schools and livelihood opportunities, while other states have put in place restrictive legal regimes that do not allow the refugees to access work and livelihood opportunities.

Thirdly, an increasing number of people are moving in mixed migratory flows, pushing all of us to rethink the drivers of mobility and displacement with a seemingly endless complexity around push and pull factors.

Root causes are multi-faceted, context-specific and require different strategic responses by states,

humanitarian and development actors.

In order to achieve durable solutions for displaced persons and affected populations, it is imperative that governments, humanitarian and development actors establish a more nuanced, evidence-informed understanding and dialogue on the root causes of displacement and the triggers and barriers to solutions.

As UNHCR’s High Commissioner convenes the eighth annual Dialogue on Protection Challenges, under the theme **Understanding and Addressing Root Causes of Displacement**, DRC puts forward the following recommendations and calls for action:

- **States are called upon to take responsibility in finding political solutions to crises and their root causes** that continue to drive people from their homes and / or prevent either return or local integration. Solutions to refugee and internal displacement require firm political commitments by states and non-state actors if they are to be durable. Only once a firm political commitment to pursue solutions is established, can the tools of the international community be effectively applied.
- **Political commitment is a precondition to address the root causes of conflict and subsequently ending conflict displacement.** Greater knowledge and practical tools (peace agreements with a focus on displaced communities and displacement, regional interstate bodies like IGAD as conflict brokers, and implementation of displacement-related regional protocols) are needed to facilitate and motivate States and parties to conflicts to mobilise and ensure the political will to resolve conflicts and harness political solutions. Efforts in support of resilience, self-reliance and access to basic services are key strategies for seeking solutions. However, these interventions will only be fully effective if there is political commitment, frameworks and tools to support the resolution of conflict and a conducive environment in terms of physical, legal and material safety and services. In addition, it is of critical importance that the political solutions reached and the frameworks developed are fully implemented.

- **Protection must be at the centre of all initiatives seeking to address the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration.** The majority of the people who are forcibly displaced from their countries of origin or forced to move irregularly have faced protection concerns and / or are at risk while on the move, in transit and during displacement. This calls for the need to ensure that all initiatives addressing root causes of displacement currently being developed by states, humanitarian and development actors, such as the EU’s Regional Development and Protection Programmes (RDPP) for the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, uphold the principle of protection of those displaced either within their own countries or across international borders, as well as during efforts towards solutions.
- **Asylum is the corner stone of international protection** and all discussions on root causes and displacement solutions need to recognise the prevalence and scope of protracted displacement situations today and that millions of displaced persons will live large parts of their lives in displacement and transitional situations. During displacement, hosting countries need to ensure a dignified situation, in which not only the right to adequate standards of living, including food, clothing and housing, is upheld but where also education for children and self-reliance of families can be pursued. Those countries that have limited capacity need to be supported.

- **The international community must distinguish between the root causes of displacement induced by natural disasters and displacement induced by conflict.** The root causes of conflict displacement are many, including persecution, conflict, armed violence, the use of explosive weapons, human rights violations, and consequently pose different challenges and require different responses and solutions.
- **Similarly, an in-depth, evidence-informed understanding of the challenges to displacement solutions is called for.** Solutions to conflict displacement require a very particular set of preconditions and interventions, including initiating conflict resolution between conflicting parties, community safety programming and instituting transitional justice and reconciliation processes.

Over the past years, **displacement** has taken a more central role and has increasingly been recognised as **not only a humanitarian issue, but a development concern and opportunity.**

Now action needs to follow. There is need for a bold review of the solutions architecture to determine which actors should drive the displacement solutions agenda and what protection frameworks and tools are appropriate to address the root causes of protracted displacement and the search for solutions. For people whose lives have been on hold for years, this review will facilitate identification of who can, and should, forge the political will to address root causes, recognise barriers, and develop solutions to protracted displacement situations.