

2019
31 Oct - 1 Nov

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE

DELIVERING THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES: LOCAL APPROACHES TO INCLUSION

'Delivering the Global Compact on Refugees: Local approaches to Inclusion', a regional government-to-government Conference, was held from 31 October – 1 November 2019 in Addis Ababa, hosted by the Government of Ethiopia. The Conference brought together six governments of the East and Horn of Africa region - Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda, as well as Representatives from the AU, IGAD and ECA, and stakeholders from donor governments, UN agencies, and NGOs.

The conference was held with the objective to foster cross-national sharing of experiences and identify forward-looking opportunities for the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and roll-out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) throughout countries in the Horn and East Africa. It served as an opportunity to take stock of good practices, lessons and opportunities in advance of the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019.

The countries of the Horn and East Africa have, despite national challenges, shown impressive commitment and leadership in tackling the challenges of forced displacement. Since their initial commitment to the implementation of the CRRF, pilot countries are now in different stages of roll-out, where some have presented a road-map for its implementation, established coordination mechanisms, and begun regional and local implementation. In all countries, development partners have engaged positively to support various initiatives that are inclusive of refugees and host communities. Experiences are emerging that chart the transition to sustainable development-oriented support to refugees and to host communities, through strengthening refugee access to essential social services and phased transition away from exclusive and parallel humanitarian assistance.

Within the context outlined above, participating governments deliberated on three specific themes:

- Theme 1:** Investing in national services to support host communities and the inclusion of refugees
- Theme 2:** Advancing the self-reliance agenda for refugees and their host communities
- Theme 3:** Expanding the whole-of-government approach, ensuring local ownership and adequate financing to the Global Compact on Refugees

In deliberating on the topics, governments identified several good practices. The creation of favourable legal frameworks and the introduction of several new initiatives have facilitated integration of refugees within the national education system of respective governments and access to civil documentation for refugees. Progressive policies, laws, directives and interventions such as making land available to refugees, ensuring freedom of mobility of refugees, putting inclusive programmes in place, investments in skills development and education, private sector participation, financial inclusion whereby refugees access commercial financial services, and investments in infrastructure are helping advance the self-reliance and inclusion agenda for refugees and their host communities. Governments carrying out consultations for National Plans at district and national levels, the use of data and evidence, and creating common projects between host and refugee communities and opening space for inclusion are among some of the good practices contributing to expanding the whole-of-government approach, ensuring local ownership and adequate financing to the Global Compact on Refugees.

Among the challenges hampering integration of refugees within the national education system were high dropout rates, the language barrier, a lack of recognition of qualification and certification, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of multi-year, predictable and sustainable funding. Inadequate harmonization of national civil registration systems, a backlog of birth registration for refugees and host communities, and limited awareness of refugee documentation by other stakeholders such as banks and the private sector need attention.

Challenges affecting the advancement of the self-reliance agenda for refugees and their host communities include security concerns, a shortage of funding despite increasing refugee influx, inconsistency of data and information between organizations, existing high unemployment rates amongst nationals, land tenure issues, and the private sector's common perception that refugees are a high-risk population to invest in. Limited coordination and alignment of humanitarian and development responses to national policies, and the failure of some organizations to work with existing local government structures were also identified as obstacles. The 'whole-of-government approach' is also affected by inadequate alignment of development partners to national and local development plans. This indicates the need for ensuring local ownership through government led planning, the mapping of existing interventions, and joint assessments.

In identifying opportunities for the future, in relation to service inclusion, participants highlighted the development of costed plans with adequate funding, the more effective use of coordination structures (national-local-donor community), increased development funding, and reviewing regional systems, such as for the recognition of qualifications and certification in relation to integration of refugees within the national education system. Refugee access to civil documentation contributes to the development of the national economy and strengthened access to social services. Working to ensure the acceptability of issued civil documents within IGAD countries, the use of existing systems and processes are some of the opportunities identified to access to civil documentation.

Opportunities related to advancing the self-reliance agenda for refugees and host communities in the region include progressive refugee legal frameworks, initiatives that facilitate refugees' engagement in businesses and the participation of the private sector, and increased funding for country-based robust jobs and livelihoods response plans. Area-based approaches which holistically consider refugees, hosts, internally displaced persons (IDP) and returnees should be further explored. The inclusion of refugees in national statistical collection, household surveys, and vulnerability mapping are considered opportunities in implementing the GCR and contributing to the whole-of-government approach.

In conclusion, it was noted that several overarching elements were necessary for the successful roll out of the GCR and the CCRF approach, notably enabling legislation and policies as well as political will to take commitments forward. Joint initiatives between host and refugee communities and the engagement of the private sector are encouraged. Coordination is key, not only within government (among line ministries and at national to local levels) but also between all relevant stakeholders for the effective realization of the whole-of-government approach. The use data and evidence are key to the implementation of the GCR.

Fulfilling national commitments to further its duty of care to refugees, relative to existing national resource constraints of governments in the East and Horn of Africa, will be dependent on further equitable responsibility-sharing by the international community. In this regard, new financing models of assistance, in addition to the engagement of new actors, should be prioritized. The upcoming Global Refugee Forum (GRF) is an opportunity to further strengthen responsibility-sharing in the spirit of the GCR, which was called for by all participating governments.

