

PRESENTATION

# Human Security and UNHCR's Strategy to Tackle the Global Displacement Crisis: The perspective of protecting displaced people

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Dear Participants, Colleagues and Friends,

I am glad to speak on this topic on 'Human Rights Day' as human security, not just for me but also from a human rights perspective, is very much about 'securing' people's access to basic rights, first and foremost the right to life but also the whole range of rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted 68 years ago in Paris. You may know that 10 December is usually celebrated under a unique theme every year - in 2016 it is:



**STAND UP  
FOR SOMEONE'S  
RIGHTS TODAY**

Human Rights Day 2016

Being on a panel with distinguished experts puts myself - a layman on human security - in a very stressful position. I would like to skip any generic statements about human security and talk about the perspective of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency which is mandated to protect, assist and find durable solutions for refugees and also acts as the protection lead in the inter-agency response to situations of internal displacement.

UNHCR's mandate kicks in when governments are unable or unwilling to protect and assist refugees. Refugees are non-citizens. They flee from their homes when they are afraid (war, human rights violations, discrimination etc.) - i.e. when they cannot enjoy the protection of their government anymore; that also means their 'human security'. Protection and human security are often interchangeable in displacement situations. Any refugee crisis is always also a crisis of human security (Ogata).

Running away from home only gives refugees 'safety' - human security requires life-saving assistance from the first days of their exile and investment into their education, skills development and individual and collective capacities.

The very initial 'human security' for refugees, and internally displaced people for that matter, however, - and this is my first point - probably comes from their own communities and often from the communities that host them, sometimes even before any aid arrives.

The challenge for any aid organization is to provide assistance in such a way that it doesn't create dependencies (which too often develop into hard-to-cure 'syndroms') but emphasizes community mobilization and self-reliance over hand-outs (assistance).

In reality, when refugees arrive in neighboring countries, the initial response (esp. provision of shelter, food and nutrition, water, health

services, etc.) does not always, or almost never, take into account the capabilities of the refugee community from Day 1. Refugees then quickly get used to being provided everything they need instead of organizing themselves as a community, as a family but also as individuals.

Of course, at the beginning of a refugee crisis, refugees often think of their situation as a very temporary one and there is nothing wrong with provision of assistance when refugees are weak, exhausted, traumatized, or malnourished.

The problem is that most refugee situations can't be resolved within a short time; on average, refugees now stay in exile for more than 10 years (Kenya/Somalia, Bangladesh/Myanmar, Pakistan/Afghanistan etc. are just a few examples of what we call 'protracted situations').

In Bangladesh, even to this day, some of the basic services for Rohingya refugees in the camps are provided by aid organizations or the government - doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers etc. Had the international community invested in education (incl. higher) for young refugees 20-25 years ago at the beginning of this situation, the refugee community could have its own refugee doctors, refugee nurses, refugee engineers, etc. by now...

This brings me to my second point - I believe that governance of human security is very important. The issue I just described - the failed opportunity to tackle 'human security' based on self-help and self-reliance development - comes from weak governance of 'human security'.

We talk about mainstreaming human security - but it has not been mainstreamed to a satisfactory level. Key documents during the recent New York high level GA meeting on refugees and migration (Sept 2016) did not mention 'human security'. But I don't want to

jump to conclusions. That could be an indicator for very good mainstreaming. (More likely it isn't.) - [By the way, one important exception is Japan's Prime Minister Abe's speech at the New York summit: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000189243.pdf>.]

Good governance of human security is manifested through the Human Security Trust Fund. Regular calls for funding are going out to agencies and partners, and the project selection ensures that funded projects indeed meet the criteria and that tangible improvements to the human security of beneficiaries can be expected. (I believe a sizeable number of projects are indeed implemented by UNHCR.)

In UNHCR, I would say, human security is understood to be mainstreamed through our protection and assistance work. We don't actively use the term as such (which could be an indicator for how deeply human security has already been mainstreamed already in UNHCR) but everyone understands that efforts to strengthen empowerment, community mobilization, education, self-reliance, addressing the specific needs of women and girls, elderly, children and adolescents etc. and the promotion of rights, in particular freedom of movement, access to the labor market, health and education all add up to define 'human security' in practice and reality.

My third and last point is about the particular challenges of today's global displacement crisis and how UNHCR tries to tackle them strategically.

What are the latest developments?

2016 was a crucial year and, in a way, turning point not just for UNHCR but the entire international community, in particular since the 2015 massive arrival of refugees in Europe. Also, we had the WHS in Istanbul, the G7 summit in Ise-Shima which, for the first time in

great detail, discussed and deliberated on refugees and migrants. Then finally, in September 2016, the GA held a summit meeting to address large movements of refugees and migrants, followed by Obama's Leaders' summit on refugees.

At the end of 2015, we had 65 million refugees and other displaced people on our books. By the end of 2016, this number will have reached 68-69 million people. Some 34,000 people are forced from their homes every day!

The New York Declaration - unanimously adopted at the GA, contains bold commitments both to address the issues we face now and to prepare the world for future challenges. These include commitments to:

- ❖ Protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status. This includes the rights of women and girls and promoting their full, equal and meaningful participation in finding solutions.
- ❖ Ensure that all refugee and migrant children are receiving education within a few months of arrival.
- ❖ Prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.
- ❖ Support those countries rescuing, receiving and hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants.
- ❖ Work towards ending the practice of detaining children for the purposes of determining their migration status.
- ❖ Strongly condemn xenophobia against refugees and migrants and support a global campaign to counter it.
- ❖ Strengthen the positive contributions made by migrants incl. refugees to economic and social development in their host countries.
- ❖ Improve the delivery of humanitarian and development

assistance to those countries most affected, including through innovative multilateral financial solutions, with the goal of closing all funding gaps.

- ❖ Implement a comprehensive refugee response, based on a new framework that sets out the responsibility of Member States, civil society partners and the UN system, whenever there is a large movement of refugees or a protracted refugee situation.
- ❖ Find new homes for all refugees identified by UNHCR as needing resettlement; and expand the opportunities for refugees to relocate to other countries through, for example, labour mobility or education schemes.
- ❖ Strengthen the global governance of migration by bringing the International Organization for Migration into the UN system.

All this - without explicit references to 'human security' - is about human security.

### **What will happen next?**

The New York Declaration contains concrete plans for how to build on these commitments: -

- ❖ Start negotiations leading to an international conference and the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018. The agreement to move toward this comprehensive framework is a momentous one. It means that migration, like other areas of international relations, will be guided by a set of common principles and approaches.
- ❖ Develop guidelines on the treatment of migrants in vulnerable situations. These guidelines will be particularly important for the increasing number of unaccompanied children on the move.

- ❖ Achieve a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees by adopting a global compact on refugees in 2018.

## **UNHCR's strategy – in relation to human security**

High Commissioner F. Grandi started in January 2016. Since then he has been having broad consultations to formulate a strategy for the next five to ten years. It does not explicitly include the term 'human security' yet the strategy (still in draft) refers to many of its important elements. Let me give a few key examples:

### **Mobilizing for Solutions**

Under this heading, UNHCR recognizes that the prospects of large-scale return and reintegration at an early stage are limited by the recurrent and protracted nature of today's conflicts. Precisely because of this, we will enhance and deepen our 'solutions reflex', mobilizing a range of partners and robustly pursuing an expansion of solutions opportunities for refugees and the internally displaced.

We will:

- ❖ actively pursue voluntary repatriation opportunities for refugees, and in-country solutions for IDPs, upholding the right to return and identifying and nurturing openings that may emerge, including through localized solutions, with appropriately designed and targeted support aimed at fostering conditions conducive to safe, dignified, sustainable return;
- ❖ mobilize political, security, human rights and development actors to address root causes of displacement and statelessness, and the

drivers of displacement, including through information-sharing, protection analysis and early warning;

- ❖ significantly expand access to third country solutions for refugees, including resettlement opportunities and complementary pathways for admission of refugees such as medical evacuation and humanitarian admission programmes, family reunification, and opportunities for skilled migration, labour mobility and education;
- ❖ pursue family reunification as a key aspect of all forms of solution;
- ❖ equip refugees with relevant skills and capacities in locations of displacement and countries of asylum, with a solutions orientation;
- ❖ identify and leverage potential opportunities for local integration or local settlement where appropriate;
- ❖ pursue alternative solutions mechanisms, such as bilateral or regional migration arrangements, which may correspond to the range of ways in which refugees themselves pursue more secure and forward looking lives; and
- ❖ foster opportunities for the gradual, voluntary reacquisition of national protection while still in exile, including through refugee participation in elections, or in peace processes.

## **Connecting to National Systems and Communities**

At a time of growing inequality and exclusion, and in which increasing numbers of people have lost the protection of their own governments and communities, we will help connect refugees, internally displaced and stateless people to local systems and



communities, expanding opportunities and enabling the progressive realization of rights, including through their inclusion in development plans.

We will:

- ❖ promote the early inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless populations, pending a solution, in national health, education, financial and other social services, and protection mechanisms available to the local population, working with states to avoid parallel systems which locate people in camps or settlements and/or leave them out of the mainstream in other ways;
- ❖ align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including through development of a strong evidence base, to ensure that displaced and stateless people are fully incorporated in national development frameworks, and that the SDGs that address root causes are fully implemented;
- ❖ engage key international development actors, including international financial institutions, in addressing the root causes of displacement and statelessness as key components of improved development outcomes; and
- ❖ empower forcibly displaced and stateless people to effectively contribute to the communities in which they live and pursue a vision of a future, including through freedom of movement, education (including enhanced access to tertiary education) and connections to economic opportunities.

In concluding, I would like to highlight the positive role Japan has been and is playing to promote human security (for refugees, internally displaced and the world's poor). Japan has been a predictable and generous supporter of UNHCR's work on behalf

and for the well-being of refugees, displaced people and their host communities.

Again, I am grateful for today's opportunity to highlight UNHCR's human security work and wish this symposium further rich discussions.

Thanks to Soka University for hosting and the Japan Association for Human Security Studies for organizing today's event!

Thank you very much!