Towards durable solutions

FAO’s programming in forced displacement contexts
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Overview

The increasingly protracted nature of forced displacement calls for sustainable and durable solutions. Amidst the many challenges of protracted crises, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is exploring new ways to work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to not only meet the immediate needs of forcibly displaced people and their hosts, but to also seek long-term solutions.

Globally, FAO is working across key forced displacement contexts, to support refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and host communities in protecting and rebuilding their livelihoods, enhancing their self-reliance and fostering inclusion, gender equality and social cohesion at the community level.

With the average duration of displacement currently estimated at 20 years for refugees and more than a decade for IDPs (European Commission, 2020), programming in forced displacement settings must go beyond humanitarian assistance and work towards longer-term development and sustainable peace. Building the resilience of displaced and host communities can simultaneously respond to humanitarian, development and peace goals. Humanitarian and peace responses can achieve sustainable results only if individuals, households and societies are resilient to conflicts and other shocks. FAO thus works with communities and governments to manage crises, minimize their negative effects and establish the foundations on which to build pathways to peace and recovery. However, longer-term development can be ensured only if individuals, households and societies have the ability to prevent these external shocks from disrupting ongoing development progress. For these reasons, resilience building is at the centre of FAO’s work in forced displacement contexts.

79.5 million people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2019 (UNHCR, 2020a)

More than eight of every 10 refugees (85 percent) are in developing countries, generally a country neighbouring the one they fled (UNHCR, 2020a)

80 percent of the world’s displaced people are in countries or territories affected by acute food insecurity and malnutrition (FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises, 2020) – many of them countries facing climate and other disaster risks

Conflict and disaster triggered 33.4 million new internal displacements across 145 countries and territories in 2019 (NRC/IDMC, 2020)
Key messages

- In forced displacement contexts, FAO pays particular attention to the specific needs of rural populations and the dynamics of rural areas in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

- The causes and consequences of forced displacement in rural areas interlink with longstanding vulnerabilities and recent/emerging crises. Increasing levels of violence and conflict, food insecurity and fragile agricultural livelihoods, socio-economic inequalities and the effects of climate change all compound forced displacement crises. To achieve durable solutions, we must therefore act on multiple fronts simultaneously.

- Given the often protracted nature of displacement, FAO combines humanitarian assistance with interventions aimed at strengthening the resilience and self-reliance of displaced populations (including empowering women), building longer-term development and contributing to sustainable peace.

- Adopting a conflict-sensitive approach in forced displacement contexts is essential to address conflict drivers at the local level, and seize opportunities to contribute to peace and social cohesion between displaced and host communities.

- Conducting a gender and generational analysis is key to understand the specific priorities, needs and constraints of women and men of different ages.
The collection of relevant qualitative and quantitative data is at the centre of FAO’s approach to better understand local dynamics in forced displacement settings and be responsive to the needs of both displaced and host communities.

FAO is scaling up its presence in forced displacement contexts, and strengthening partnerships with United Nations (UN) agencies (particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] and the International Organization for Migration [IOM]) and key donors to increase the impact and reach of its forced displacement programming.
Where is FAO assisting forcibly displaced people?

Source: United Nations World map, 2020
The scale of FAO’s programming changes considerably from country to country.
As forced displacement crises unfold at unprecedented levels, rural areas in developing countries – often themselves experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity and exposed to multiple risks – are hosting a significant portion of the world’s forcibly displaced. Economic crises, climate change, natural disasters and the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are further compounding forced displacement. Given this complexity, in forced displacement contexts, FAO focuses on supporting and rebuilding rural livelihoods, laying the foundations for longer-term development and contributing to peaceful coexistence among refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and host communities.
Recognizing that rural areas bear the greatest burden in hosting large numbers of displaced people, one-third of FAO’s emergency and resilience funding is allocated to address the challenge of forced displacement, representing well over half a billion dollars in the last biennium.

FAO works across different displacement settings (i.e. camp and non-camp settings, rural and peri-urban areas where refugees and IDPs have chosen to return, and communities hosting displaced people), addressing the specific needs of displaced populations and their host communities. Forced displacement can strongly influence local dynamics and community relationships, particularly in regard to access to natural resources, services, and local markets.

For FAO, identifying and addressing potential conflict drivers in displacement contexts is crucial to avoid creating or exacerbating existing grievances, inequalities, marginalization, inter-ethnic violence and tensions. **Forcibly displaced populations and host communities are themselves development and peace actors**, and FAO thus strives to enable and empower these populations to contribute to local economies and community’s development. Adopting a conflict-sensitive approach with a gender lens to forced displacement programming is extremely important in order to seize opportunities to contribute to local peace, improve trust and foster social cohesion between displaced and host communities.

Who benefits from FAO’s work on forced displacement?
Strengthening the resilience and self-reliance of displaced populations

FAO is helping displaced people to move from dependence on humanitarian assistance to self-reliance. Facing the psychological and financial costs of losing their livelihoods, assets and social networks, displaced populations are often dependent on external aid for their survival, and this tends to last for a significant length of time.

In many contexts, limited opportunities exist for displaced populations to integrate into local economies, with access to land, employment and social protection restricted by the legal and policy frameworks of the host country. FAO combines agricultural livelihood support with interventions aimed at increasing food security and nutrition, and boosting the social capital and adaptive capacity of the forcibly displaced.

Adopting innovative solutions in contexts where livelihoods of the forcibly displaced are severely restricted, FAO encourages the active participation of, and consultation with, both displaced and host communities in identifying and implementing practical solutions at the local level.

At the same time, FAO supports the creation of an enabling environment for the socio-economic inclusion or re-integration of forcibly displaced people, particularly those returning to rural or peri-urban areas. This includes increasing local stakeholders’ knowledge of the rights of displaced populations; advocating for policies that promote socio-economic inclusion; raising awareness on the benefits of integrating displaced populations into local economies; and, wherever possible, establishing and strengthening relationships between displaced populations, host communities and local institutions.
Generations of Palestinians with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) refugee status have lived in Area C of the West Bank, where agricultural livelihoods are severely affected by restrictions over access to natural resources and the recurrence of economic, climatic and human-made shocks.

This harsh reality has disproportionately affected vulnerable small-scale herders who are prohibited from building permanent structures for their livestock and struggle to access water, grazing land and affordable fodder.

In response to prohibitions relating to the construction of permanent structures, and the risk of further displacement, FAO provided herders with weatherproof, mobile shelters to protect livestock from winter temperatures. Energy blocks made from olive waste were provided as an alternative energy source for household use as well as for heating animal sheds, given the lack of electricity infrastructure. FAO also supported herder communities in the construction and rehabilitation of critical water storage and rainwater collection cisterns.

After receiving specialized training, the beneficiaries were able to establish their own water storage facilities, ensuring local ownership of the project and equipping herder communities with the necessary technical skills and knowledge to increase their water security should they need to establish and rehabilitate water cisterns in the future.
For many years, the Diffa Region in the Niger has hosted refugees fleeing conflict and violence in the northern states of Nigeria. FAO has supported the creation of 251 Dimitra Clubs, both in the Sayam Forage refugee and returnee camp and in three other refugees’ settlement areas in the Chétimari et Mainé Soroa communes. Dimitra Clubs are informal groups of women and men who come together on a voluntary basis to identify common problems, discuss, seek solutions and take action to resolve them. This community engagement approach is used in humanitarian, development and peace projects to facilitate community-led development, and improve gender equality and women’s leadership.

This gender transformative lens is central to the approach, which leverages collective action to improve dialogue at different levels (inter-ethnic, between host communities and refugees, between women and men, etc.). To help disseminate messages to members and between clubs, solar radios were made available to club leaders. In the four refugee camps in Diffa, concrete solutions were implemented by the clubs in various areas such as agriculture and nutrition, natural resource management, social cohesion, hygiene practices and maintaining local infrastructure. Micro-saving mechanisms were also established by the clubs to improve the living conditions, create livelihood opportunities and implement agreed upon solutions.

This process was particularly instrumental in empowering refugee women and youth, and contributing to social cohesion in the camps. In the Sayam Forage refugee camp, women and men representatives of the Dimitra Clubs now participate in monthly meetings of the camp management committee. In all camps, the clubs have become a powerful source of information and communication. People are informed of planned actions and can express their needs with development and humanitarian actors. As a result of previous Dimitra Club activities, refugees have also spontaneously formed additional Dimitra Cubs in several camps.
Protecting and promoting the recovery of agricultural livelihoods while enabling social cohesion

Conflict and violence, especially if recurrent and prolonged, can have a devastating impact on agriculture-dependent economies, disrupting rural livelihoods and destroying critical infrastructure. This has long-lasting effects on resilience, and people’s ability to rebuild their livelihoods.

In forced displacement contexts, FAO provides direct life-saving assistance to ensure basic levels of food security and to sustain and rebuild livelihoods. This includes the immediate provision of agricultural inputs and services, cash and voucher programmes, and the rehabilitation of agricultural infrastructure.

At the same time, FAO works together with local communities and authorities to lay the foundations for longer-term development by building the capacities of displaced and host populations (e.g. agricultural techniques, value chain development, maintenance of local infrastructure and the sustainable management of natural resources).

FAO also works to improve mutual trust, understanding and collaboration between displaced and host populations by promoting activities that range from participation in technical trainings, to community farming and joint rehabilitation work.
YEMEN

Supporting agricultural recovery while promoting community-level social cohesion

The war in Yemen remains one of the world’s largest humanitarian crises, with 80 percent of Yemen’s population in need of humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, 2020c). Water scarcity is one of the most pressing issues in the country, aggravated by six years of uninterrupted conflict and its destructive effects on water infrastructure.

In Yemen, FAO is protecting and promoting the recovery of agricultural livelihoods, with a focus on rehabilitating water infrastructure, and the socio-economic inclusion of displaced populations.

FAO is also supporting local Water User Associations (WUAs), where women play an active role, in preventing and resolving local water-related conflicts. Furthermore, WUA’s are important means of livelihoods for IDPs, who are employed in WUA-managed community greenhouse production. This opportunity to contribute to the economic life of the host communities helps IDPs regain self-confidence, economic independence while contributing to strengthening community-level social cohesion.

FAO organizes joint cash-for-work activities for construction and rehabilitation works, bringing together IDPs, returnees and host communities.
With 3.6 million Syrian refugees under temporary protection (UNHCR, 2020b), Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world. In order to help Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens gain labour market-appropriate skills, FAO designed joint vocational trainings, implemented with European Union funding.

The trainings offered a combination of theoretical learning and on-the-job training in agricultural companies and farms. To support refugee and host community trainees’ placement in the labour market, FAO organized job fairs attended by private companies and farms. During these fairs, half-day seminars provided information on local employment and social security procedures, particularly relevant to Syrian refugees with temporary protection status.

Thanks to an agreement with the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR), trainees obtained official certifications endorsed by the Ministry of Education and were subsequently registered in the İSKUR system to receive regular notifications of job vacancies.

Fifty-two percent of Syrian refugee participants gained new income after participating in the project. A number of women’s cooperatives have also become operational as a result of the project, both producing and selling in local markets.
Strengthening food security and nutrition of displaced and host populations

In forced displacement contexts, the food consumption and nutrition of both displaced and host populations is often seriously impacted. When large numbers of displaced people settle in rural areas already suffering from food insecurity, the additional pressure on local resources can result in livelihood deterioration and food shortages.

For example, the increased need for wood-fuel for cooking can result in the degradation of forests and woodlands, generate tensions between host and displaced communities, and negatively impact the nutrition of vulnerable households that may resort to undercooking food or skipping meals to save fuel.

Through the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) approach, FAO works with communities to address these issues by establishing tree nurseries, promoting the use of safe and renewable energy, implementing agro-forestry systems and introducing fuel-efficient technologies and cooking practices.

Furthermore, FAO supports the implementation of preparedness measures that allow communities to prevent, cope with and rapidly recover from crises. FAO’s Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) system translates warning signs into anticipatory actions. Early actions can range from the distribution of cash transfers to infrastructure building and interventions aimed at boosting food production and food security ahead of a potential food crisis.
Among the driest provinces in Colombia, the department of La Guajira has been at the forefront of the Venezuelan migration crisis. In 2019, FAO conducted an EWEA action intervention in La Guajira following early signs of below-average rainfall, high temperatures affecting the planting season and an expected increase in people crossing the border due to the deteriorating situation in Venezuela.

In order to rapidly boost local food production and help local families and Venezuelan migrants to maintain a healthy diet, plots of agricultural land were selected to set up Community Production Centres (CPCs). CPCs were used to organize trainings on new techniques to increase crop yields in harsh weather and quickly producing a diverse range of crops. These centres rapidly became a gathering point for Colombian and Venezuelan families who came together to exchange knowledge and produce food on test plots. The centres also allowed Colombian and Venezuelan families to build relationships, and challenge pre-existing negative perceptions of each other.

FAO continues to use CPCs to deliver trainings on food conservation and cooking techniques of high nutritional food. In order to prevent and manage agro-climatic risks, CPCs are also used to train local communities, Venezuelan migrants and returnees on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
Investing in strong partnerships for a comprehensive response

Displacement-mandated UN agencies such as UNHCR and IOM are key partners of FAO in displacement contexts. In recognition of this, in recent years FAO has signed separate Global Memoranda of Understanding with both agencies and has been a strong supporter and contributor to the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). In 2018, FAO and IOM co-chaired the Global Migration Group, an interagency group that provided technical support to the GCM sessions, which was subsequently replaced by the UN Network on Migration.

Following the GCR adoption in 2019, FAO was a strong supporter of the Global Refugee Forum, during which it renewed its commitment to the GCR with a number of pledges to address the challenges faced by refugee populations. In recognition of the need to better protect displaced people in the context of food crises, UNHCR has also recently joined the Global Network Against Food Crises, an alliance of humanitarian and development actors launched by the European Union, FAO and the World Food Programme. At the country level, joint projects and partnerships with IOM or UNHCR are currently in operation in a number of forced displacement contexts.
Uganda and Kenya are home to large refugee populations who, despite their prolonged presence, continue to remain largely dependent on food assistance. Given the critical need to develop refugee livelihoods and promote self-reliance and inclusion in local economies, FAO is working with refugee populations and the private sector to facilitate inclusion in local agricultural value chains.

Local agricultural production relies on traditional rainfed techniques, with poor access to market opportunities and lack of awareness of local supply and demand. However, thanks to an enabling host government policy environment, and the financial contribution of IKEA Foundation, FAO and UNHCR have established a collaboration with selected private sector entities for the development of agricultural value chains that can help refugees and host communities to engage in the local market.

Through building the capacity of refugees and host communities to engage in market-oriented sustainable production and agribusiness, and identifying and building profitable and sustainable value chains in targeted displacement settings, FAO and UNHCR are working to create a favourable policy environment for agribusiness in fragile situations. The goal of this joint project is to further enhance the enabling policy context in Kenya and Uganda, as well as demonstrate the socio-economic benefits of refugee inclusion, for replication in other forced displacement contexts. UNHCR’s support is critical not only to support in-site planning but also to identify entry points for influencing refugee policy and to advocate for the necessary reforms.
Transhumance is a key component of the sub-Saharan African economy and culture, where nomadic herding populations move cyclically along various traditional corridors (both internally and across borders) in search of grazing and water for their livestock. These migratory movements are often accompanied by conflicts, varying in scale, with sedentary farming populations along transhumance routes, and can impact local communities involved in other livelihood practices. Border communities, in many cases already hosting displaced populations, are particularly exposed to the risk of local violence.

Along the border between northern Central African Republic and southern Chad, FAO and IOM are implementing a joint Peacebuilding Fund project to sustainably prevent and mitigate agropastoral conflicts. The project brings together stakeholders from both the Central African Republic and Chad, and aims to improve the mapping of pastoral movements, increase dialogue between transhumant groups and sedentary farming communities, and strengthen the capacity and coordination of national institutions for a safe and dignified management of transhumant movements. IOM’s expertise is crucial for the development of training on integrated border management systems, and for the implementation of data collection methodologies such as its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which analyses and monitors population movements in specific locations within a particular time period.
Towards durable solutions to forced displacement: data collection and evidence-based responses

FAO’s work in rural displacement settings ranges from the provision of emergency livelihood assistance to longer-term support for durable solutions to forced displacement. This includes supporting social and economic inclusion of displaced populations and facilitating the sustainable reintegration of refugees and IDPs who choose to return to their origin countries and communities, many of which are in rural areas.

The collection of accurate and disaggregated data is a prerequisite for formulating evidence-based interventions, yet there remains a significant lack of forced displacement-related data in rural contexts, with traditional datasets on displacement and migration often overlooking rural populations. In order to fill this gap, FAO is adapting its data collection tools and methodologies (such as the Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis tool and Early Warning Early Action systems) to facilitate consideration of the local contextual dynamics of rural displacement settings. The use of participatory approaches is essential to include the voices of displaced and host populations throughout the life cycle of an intervention, including needs assessments; monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning frameworks; as well as in the analysis of social dynamics at the local level, in order to identify potential causes of tensions and contribute to peace and social cohesion.
After years of conflict, in Iraq, an increasing number of displaced people are gradually returning to their communities of origin, requiring targeted support to facilitate their social and economic re-integration.

FAO is working with local communities in Ninevah Governorate to assist returnees to reintegrate into their local communities through targeted livelihood support, combined with larger efforts to reconstruct the agriculture sector, which has been disproportionately affected by the conflict.

In the rural and peri-urban areas of Ninevah, FAO is supporting the agricultural livelihoods of returnees and local communities and is gathering valuable data on local dynamics and return migration trends in the aftermath of COVID-19 in order to better shape its intervention. In doing this, FAO has used existing data on returnees’ livelihoods and safety perceptions available through the Return Index, collected and developed by IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix.

Complementary data collection tools have been developed and included in FAO’s assessment of COVID-19-related impacts on the agriculture sector. This enables FAO and its partners to understand how COVID-19 has affected not only agricultural livelihoods but also social dynamics at governorate level (e.g. in relation to access to natural resources) and rural migration trends in a rapidly changing context.

Collection of this information contributes to a stronger understanding and refining of the type of support needed by returnees and local communities, while identifying and addressing potential causes of conflict and contributing to social cohesion.
UGANDA

FAO’s comprehensive approach to strengthening refugees’ economic inclusion and self-reliance

Uganda hosts more than 1.4 million refugees (UNHCR, 2020a), many of whom live in rural settlements. Known for its progressive national refugee policy, the Government of Uganda allocates land for agriculture to refugees and grants them access to basic social services and the right to work and freedom of movement.

FAO is part of Uganda’s Refugee Coordination Mechanism (RCM), a national platform of government ministries, UN agencies and civil society actors operating under several thematic working groups relevant to the refugee response.

Since 2019, FAO has been a co-chair of the working group on Livelihoods and Resilience together with World Vision International and the United Nations Development Programme.

Feeding into the Livelihood and Resilience working group, FAO has conducted yearly Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) in Uganda’s refugee-hosting districts, to assess the state of refugees’ food security, well-being and resilience. The data collected serves to identify bottlenecks and catalysts to resilience building, and frame FAO’s refugee response accordingly.

Together with UNHCR, FAO is also working to strengthen the resources and skills of refugee producers’ groups and support the development of local value chains with high potential for employment creation.
References


Saving livelihoods saves lives

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