



# Remodelling the EU Partnership Framework to meet the needs of displaced populations

## Recommendations from Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Ethiopia

### 1. Introduction

Alleviating poverty, improving governance and engaging in international efforts to end conflicts so that people do not need to leave their homes is the first step towards an effective and sustainable migration policy. If designed in the right way, the compacts being developed under the EU's Partnership Framework could provide a unique opportunity to improve the lives of displaced people and host communities in third countries.

However, the short-sighted goals currently driving the approach are likely to have the opposite impact. We remain extremely concerned by the underlying motives of European leaders to reduce the objectives of the compacts to a narrow agenda which simply attempts to reduce migration flows and increase return rates, as set out in the Bratislava Declaration and reiterated in the October European Council Conclusions. The focus on objectives of deterrence and containment risks further destabilising countries already experiencing conflict and fragility, undermining the very development efforts which would enhance people's prospects and reduce the need for them to undertake the risky and dangerous journey to Europe. Moreover, making EU support conditional on third countries' cooperation on managing migration flows is entirely contrary to the EU's treaty-based requirements on development aid, which can be used solely to reduce poverty. This conditionality is likely to lead to violations of the fundamental rights of displaced people, which should be front and centre of the approach.

As a leading international humanitarian organisation providing emergency assistance and long term support to displaced people in Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Ethiopia, the IRC urges the EU to rethink the way that the Partnership Framework is being framed. In this paper, we set out an approach which would ensure that the compacts uphold fundamental rights and bring measurable outcomes for displaced and host populations<sup>1</sup>. Drawing on evidence from our experience on the ground, we set out the priority needs that should be addressed in Mali, Ethiopia, Niger and Nigeria in four key outcome areas: protection, safety, livelihoods and education.

#### **Harnessing the potential of the compacts to improve lives**

As set out in a recent IRC/CGD paper<sup>1</sup>, when grounded in the best practices of programme design and management, a compact model offers a series of advantages to respond to refugee crises:

- It brings together multiple stakeholders to agree collective outcomes to meet the needs of refugees and host communities, tailored to their specific circumstances;
- It allows for long term planning, which is necessary to address the reality of a protracted crisis, and provides flexible resources over multiple years;
- It sets mutually reinforcing commitments to financing and policy changes, creating incentives to remove barriers to and invest in the wellbeing of displaced populations.

These positive impacts can only be achieved if the following core components are in place:

- A transparent and inclusive process, with host country ownership;
- Measurable, shared outcomes for refugees, returnees, IDPs, and host communities;
- Formal accountability mechanisms to monitor progress towards indicators;
- Absolute respect for the fundamental rights of displaced populations, including unconditional and specific provisions for people in need of international protection.

<sup>1</sup> This approach builds on the model outlined by Ash/Huang (2016). Refugee Compacts: an initial framework. Washington, DC: IRC and Centre for Global Development and International Rescue Committee.

## 2. Core components of an effective migration compact

In order to safeguard fundamental rights and international protection, while ensuring the compacts result in meaningful change for displaced populations, the following four components must be in place:

### ***A transparent and inclusive process, with host country ownership***

Multiple local and international stakeholders must be involved in the development process, to ensure that the compacts respond to actual needs and to foster a sense of ownership by actors who will be key to their implementation. This must include local NGOs, who in certain high risk areas are the only actors present on the ground.

### ***Measurable, shared outcomes for refugees, returnees, IDPs, and host communities***

The compacts will be financed primarily by redirecting existing EU development aid, whose goal is - and must remain - poverty reduction. A real improvement in the lives of local populations must be the central goal of a compact and the metric of its success. As highlighted in the Grand Bargain, governments and humanitarian and development actors must define and agree to a set of shared outcomes for improving displaced people's protection, safety, livelihoods, education, health, and empowerment. As part of this process, actors must determine a set of indicators that measure progress against outcomes, rather than only against inputs, processes, and activities.

### ***Formal accountability mechanisms to monitor progress towards indicators***

It is essential that robust scrutiny and accountability mechanisms are established to monitor progress towards agreed outcomes on both sides. Traditionally, host country governments have not been responsible for meeting the needs of refugees, as evident by their omission from national development plans. The compacts must introduce accountability for these populations and their rights while acknowledging the obligation of shared responsibility with humanitarian and development actors. On the EU side, the European Parliament, which has so far been overlooked in the migration partnership, must be given a role in scrutinising how EU aid is spent and ensuring that it has a positive impact on local populations.

The compacts are also a useful vehicle to ensure synergies with other parallel international processes, such as the follow up to the UN-led and President Obama-led Leaders' summits on refugees and migration held in September 2016. For example, they could be used to monitor progress made towards pledges on issues such as expanding out-of-camp policy, and creating work permits and jobs for refugees.

### ***Absolute respect for the fundamental rights of displaced populations, including unconditional and specific provisions for people in need of international protection***

Respect for and promotion of fundamental rights must be integrated into every stage of the process. Appropriate safeguards that ensure respect for human rights and the necessary protection mechanisms for displaced people must be a core element of each compact. A robust monitoring system must be set up to ensure respect for these rights.

## 3. Country-specific needs assessment

### ***Ethiopia***

Hosting more refugees than any other country on the African continent, Ethiopia continues to keep its doors open to refugee influxes at the same time as it grapples with its own development and humanitarian needs, and many rural communities remain vulnerable to shocks and struggle to recover. The IRC has a long-standing presence in Ethiopia, providing assistance to refugees from neighbouring countries and Ethiopians in under-served and/or crisis-affected local communities impacted by drought, flooding and/or conflict.

Extending the accessibility of basic services to all populations remains a key issue. Geo-political location, proximity to urban/peri-urban areas, socio-economic status, clan structures and relations, access to information, and education levels play a role in how accessible services are to different

demographics throughout the country. Minority and other vulnerable groups face additional barriers, as they are often less mobile and/or confined to the home. There is a need to enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities (18% of the population) at all levels of daily life.

Women and girls often find themselves in a vulnerable situation when male family members migrate, leaving them behind. These women and girls often become the sole caretaker for children and elders, and, particularly where access to basic needs and services is inadequate, face increased exposure to violence and risks of exploitation and abuse.

### ***Niger***

In addition to challenges of political instability, chronic food insecurity and natural crises, Niger is facing increased security concerns on its borders from various external threats, including insecurity in Libya, spillover from the conflict in Mali, and violent extremism in north eastern Nigeria. Coupled with multiple armed political-religious conflicts on the Nigerian and Malian borders and an active Al-Qaeda presence in northern Niger, this has resulted in continuing humanitarian crises, high levels of vulnerability, and an increasing influx of displaced persons from Mali and Nigeria.

Internal migration often takes place annually because of poverty, low agricultural production, or lack of available work. This includes young men but also sometimes women who leave to find work after the harvest in October/November in larger cities or other countries. Targeted action to support these populations and their livelihoods could help to eliminate the factors that force them to leave their homes and in some cases lead to onward movements.

The greatest humanitarian needs are currently in the Diffa region. This region was already a “forgotten” area of the country before the attacks of Nigerian insurgents (Boko Haram) led to the displacement of people into Niger. Mixed with the current effects of the crisis and the likelihood of a continued presence of insurgents, post-conflict and recovery work there will be important to address. Additionally, specific support is needed in Agadez, which also hosts Nigerian returnees from Libya. Urgent challenges to be addressed in Agadez include the prevalence of sex trafficking in women and girls; hygiene and sanitation, water scarcity, the lack of appropriate accommodation, lack of data and analysis, no safe spaces or opportunities to seek protection (despite efforts ongoing at national level), lack of security and limited law enforcement, and involvement in trafficking. The main region from which migrants are leaving from Niger for other countries (mainly Libya and Algeria) is the region of Zinder, Department of Kantche.

Access to documentation is a major issue. While precise data on the number of separated or unaccompanied children identified and documented is difficult to attain in the Diffa region due to the large number of locations to cover and difficult access, IRC Niger estimates that around 60% of people who fled Nigeria into Niger do not have legal identification.

### ***Nigeria***

Nigeria is a diverse country with areas of great development and wealth, and with areas affected by serious humanitarian crisis and profound poverty. Over 2.1 million IDPs are currently living in north eastern Nigeria with only 8% living in official camps and receiving any sort of government support. The majority are women and children who have been displaced multiple times due to attacks and territorial expansion by Boko Haram. With northern Nigeria chronically under-developed and the north east in particular now affected by years of increasingly violent conflict, there are numerous internally displaced and host communities in need of support. Premature or forced returns of IDPs back to areas newly retaken from Boko Haram must be avoided as these areas are very insecure (in some cases surrounded by Boko Haram-controlled areas), lack livelihood opportunities and are almost inaccessible to humanitarian actors.

Strategies to address the needs of returnees are urgently needed. Factors such as the revitalisation of market structures and systems, road networks, banking systems and communication to improve livelihoods opportunities are crucial, yet these are not always considered as immediate provisions in

the early stages of return. For many farmers currently living in urban displacement, the recovery process when they are able to return to their original homes will be long and challenging.

In north eastern Nigeria, there are virtually no economic opportunities outside central urban areas due to insecurity, while the majority group of farmers who have grown up in rural areas live entirely off the land through subsistence farming. Their economic well-being has been profoundly impacted as they are now living in urban displacement in an unfamiliar urban environment. Many have been forced to resort to begging in order to survive.

The prevalence of trafficking and sexual exploitation is a major concern. According to IOM figures, 76% of the refugees and migrants surveyed in Italy between June and August 2016 had directly experienced trafficking or other exploitative practices while travelling on the Central Mediterranean Route to Europe. Nigerian women arrived in Italy in unprecedented numbers in 2016, with nearly 4000 women arriving in the first 6 months. IOM believes that the majority of these women are being trafficked into Europe for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

### ***Mali***

In the context of conflict and protracted food crisis, high levels of poverty and weak state capacity to respond (particularly in the north and centre of the country), tremendous needs exist in Mali. The IRC's partners and beneficiaries report difficulty in accessing basic services in health, water, education, hygiene, markets, agricultural and livestock inputs, and credit opportunities. Women are particularly disadvantaged: harmful traditional practices and behaviours continue to impede the power that women and girls have over their own bodies, their right to move, access to basic services, including health and education, and to economic assets and activity. There is also a need to ensure responses are better adapted to the needs of particular populations such as nomads to education and health (access and quality).

In northern Mali, levels of crisis and conflict, coupled with weak state capacity and legitimacy, impact most negatively on outcomes for displaced populations. Particular attention should be paid to IDPs, returnees from Niger and Burkina Faso, rural host communities and marginalized groups such as youth and communities affected by conflict and recurrent natural hazards in Mali. However, the recent crisis of 2012 is now extending into the centre of Mali, as the focus on the north has led to a lack of attention on the needs in the centre, through for example an underdevelopment of basic services.

Efforts to promote good governance and conflict resolution could have a significant positive impact in Mali. The latest crisis has affected the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. Projects focusing on social cohesion and conflict resolution are crucial to promote the recovery of communities ravaged by inter or intra communitarian tensions.

## **4. Recommendations by sector**

The following recommendations are broken down into four of outcome areas which are key to promoting self-reliance: protection, safety, livelihoods and education. Since many priorities are common to all four countries, these are not broken down by country.

### ***Protection***

At the most basic level, the compacts must strengthen refugees' and IDPs' protection. Outcomes must be focused on the displaced, particularly women and girls, being able to make decisions about their own wellbeing as well as where and how they desire to live.

Where programming targets refugee populations, it should also address the needs of and work with refugee-hosting communities. In many cases, both have inadequate access to social services, quality education and health services and facilities, and in some cases host communities have lower levels of access than refugees do, which causes tension between the two groups. Community-based interventions should include social cohesion and enhanced integration, even in the absence of policies that enable formal integration.

**Priority protection objectives for Nigeria, Niger, Mali and Ethiopia include:**

- Proper respect for the right to non-refoulement e.g. through border monitoring to avoid refoulement and/or abuses of refugees, returnees or IDPs;
- Improved access of displaced populations to documentation that allows for freedom of movement and ability to access services outside original place of registration;
- Respect for the land rights of IDPs, and protection from forcible eviction;
- Thorough grounding and adherence for and from security staff, border guards, law enforcement officers and other public servants in the rights of displaced populations, to be delivered through, for example, roll-out of training and monitoring of adherence;
- Strengthened rights for displaced people to move freely within the country's borders and to decide where to live;
- Greater access to employment, housing, education, health, water and other basic services with safeguards against explicit and implicit discrimination of all forms;
- Inclusion of displaced people and refugees into national development plans;
- Strengthening of the institutional framework for the protection of children, in particular unaccompanied children. Where such legislation already exists, there are major issues with awareness and enforcement;
- Introduction of strong social accountability frameworks in order to involve different stakeholders in planning, delivery of sustainable improved services, for example;
- Respect for the rights of refugees and IDPs to access services and vote outside their states of origin. This is crucial to address isolation, disempowerment, and marginalisation;
- Increased opportunities for IDPs and refugees, particularly marginalised groups, to participate in issues affecting their lives. Projects to promote ownership and involvement in local development are crucial.
- Greater inclusion of persons with disabilities who are excluded from most care and support systems and community decision-making;
- Improvement of infrastructure to protect returnees and promote their reintegration.

**Safety**

Lack of safety is one of the key factors that force people to move. Displaced people cannot begin to rebuild their lives and achieve self-reliance until their basic human security needs are met. Outcomes focused on enhancing people's safety, especially the safety of women and girls, should be a core aim of the compacts.

**Priority safety objectives for Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Ethiopia include:**

- Greater resilience of communities affected by natural hazards, war or conflicts, to be promoted for example through enhanced support for community-based protection;
- Ensuring women and children are safe from harm, through interventions such as support services; awareness raising about prevention of and responses to GBV, harmful traditional practices, and threats faced by children (e.g. exploitation, neglect) among communities and service providers; safe spaces for women and vulnerable groups in refugee and local contexts, including the development of supportive community networks; better identification and protection of people vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation;
- Increase in the use of social cohesion, conflict resolution, mitigation and analysis strategies, including training to prevent and mitigate conflicts between host communities and refugees, returnees and IDPs, and promote social cohesion;
- Substantially improved capacity of the rapid response system for emergency services.

**Livelihoods**

The compacts hold potential to contribute towards the goals of ensuring refugees and displaced persons have decent work opportunities that allow them to generate income, become self-reliant, and contribute to the communities in which they live. This could be a potentially useful vehicle to address the specific policy and implementation constraints that refugees and their host communities face in achieving self-reliance. The kind of outcomes that may be addressed through the compacts include building host country capacity for registration or work permit application procedures, entrepreneurship

and job creation schemes, digital and financial infrastructure regulations for cash transfers (e.g. biometric identification), facilitating refugees' access to land and finance, and the development of non-camp based solutions.

**Priority livelihoods objectives for Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Ethiopia include:**

- Policy changes to allow refugees to access public micro-finance products and services and to support savings/asset building;
- Greater opportunities for mentoring, entrepreneurship, apprenticeships, start up support and micro-franchising to help prepare young people in particular to enter the workforce;
- New employment opportunities generated specifically for displaced and host communities. Where major new projects are developed with a job creation element, consideration should be given to including targets for the percentage of jobs to be filled by displaced people;
- Improved market-relevant literacy, numeracy, social and emotional skills for refugees and host communities; delivered through provision of training and more holistic and comprehensive programming that works simultaneously across sectors and outcomes;
- Greater support for rural diversification - for example diversification of incomes through village savings and loan associations, income-generating activities, and activities leading to the development of agricultural chains such as seeds fairs;
- Greater access for refugees to land and finance to facilitate self-reliance;
- Strengthened food security for vulnerable households through action to promote resilience to recurring shocks - for example through cash, recovery, agriculture including value chain development, livestock and nutrition integrated programming;
- Increase in returnees' self-reliance and reintegration into the work force, for example through economic development support, support for returning farmers such as provision of tools and training in improved farming techniques, ensuring targeted dissemination of information about available job opportunities;
- Revitalisation of vital infrastructures in regions recovering from conflict, such as market structures and systems, road networks, banking systems and communication. These are a prerequisite for economic activities, yet are not always addressed in the early stages of return.

**Education**

The compacts provide one vehicle for delivering the emerging commitment from the international community to the pressing issue of education in emergencies. It is crucial that the compacts result in outcomes for displaced populations in the areas that matter: access to safe schools and quality education, and improved numeracy, literacy, and social emotional skills and recovery from trauma. The compacts should aim to promote the development of flexible education systems and policies through formal and informal sectors.

**Priority education objectives for Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Ethiopia include:**

- Education programmes are adapted to situations of conflict and displacement and responsive to needs of particular populations, such as accelerated learning or after hours learning;
- Broader access, enrolment and attendance of all groups to education is promoted, with a focus on ensuring that girls and women have equal access to services as men and boys as a cross cutting objective;
- Greater investment is provided in generating evidence on what works to deliver quality education for displaced people;
- Greater support is provided for children's emotional and social well-being;
- Non-formal education is recognised and promoted - as without support from INGOs to provide access to non-formal education, many children have no access to education;
- Ambitious targets are put in place for access, learning, and social outcomes for the displaced;
- Community and parental acceptance of education, particularly for girls is improved. In addition to the focus on non-formal education access, there is a need for projects to support the transition of some children from non-formal into formal learning structures in areas where government schools have reopened and are safe.

## 5. Conclusion

By remodelling the compacts to encompass the four components outlined above, and coupling this with vigorous monitoring to ensure the delivery of key outcomes and the protection of vulnerable populations, the Partnership Framework approach could become an innovative tool for seeking longer-term solutions to displacement. The EU has all the knowledge and expertise to develop a values-based and solutions oriented external policy, as the recent Communication “Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance” demonstrates. Coherent implementation of such a model will require political willingness, effective monitoring tools and involvement of civil society and affected populations themselves. In return, the EU has the opportunity to stand out as a champion of conscience in protecting people on the move.

*For more information, contact Imogen Sudbery, Head of the Brussels Office, IRC Belgium: [imogen.sudbery@rescue.org](mailto:imogen.sudbery@rescue.org)*