

Displacement

Displacement
World Vision Australia's
Public Policy Position

World Vision Australia's position on displacement

World Vision Australia calls for a courageous, multi-faceted approach addressing the causes of displacement and the immediate and longer-term needs of forcibly displaced people and the communities hosting them. World Vision supports a global compact on responsibility-sharing for displaced persons.

Political actors must use their influence to prevent and resolve conflict. Where this is not possible, states must commit to finding durable solutions, including significantly increasing the number and range of legal pathways for admission and resettlement.

Humanitarian actors carry too much responsibility for responding to protracted displacement crises. They are neither best placed to address the socio-political root causes of displacement (such as conflict, violence, instability and persecution) nor sufficiently resourced to respond to the scale of displacement. Failing to move beyond short-term humanitarian responses will continue to trap millions in heightened vulnerability, erode development gains, and potentially provoke new conflicts.

Protection for displaced people must be urgently prioritised. Detailed analysis and recommendations, especially for children on the move, are presented in World Vision International's Forced Displacement Policy Position.¹

Governments and responding agencies should promote self-reliance and mutual benefit between displaced people and the communities hosting them. Ignoring the potential contributions of displaced people and failing to adequately resource livelihood interventions strains host communities, sometimes leading to conflict situations and instability.

Displaced people can become self-reliant and contribute to the local economy when appropriate resourcing is allocated and integrated development planning is undertaken to grant displaced populations access to local markets and services such as education and housing. Such an approach builds social cohesion and reduces marginalisation.²

The current narrative depicting displaced populations as burdens must be reversed. World Vision Australia supports the global campaign initiated by the United Nations' Secretary-General to counter xenophobia, highlight our common humanity and stress the positive contributions made by refugees.

Finally, both forcibly displaced populations and their host communities, including children and young people, must meaningfully participate in the development of durable solutions. Displaced and hosting populations must be appropriately informed of all decision-making processes related to their wellbeing, be allowed space and opportunity to contribute their perspectives and actively participate as partners in the development of mutually-beneficial solutions.

World Vision's mandate to advocate on displacement

World Vision responds to the needs of forcibly displaced children and their families with high quality programming that is linked to advocacy influencing policy at local, regional, and global levels. World Vision implements comprehensive programming across the humanitarian and development spectrum for displaced populations and hosting communities in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Pacific.³

World Vision Australia's policy recommendations for change

World Vision Australia calls on the Australian government to:

1. ensure that the act of seeking asylum is not criminalised, that asylum seekers are not penalised for the method by which they seek protection and that Australia's policy responses to asylum seekers arriving by boat are consistent with its international legal obligations;⁴
2. ensure that all of Australia's policy responses, and particularly offshore detention, respect the principle of non-refoulement, including by not sending asylum seekers to third countries where they risk being returned to their countries of origin (chain refoulement);⁵
3. ensure refugees in offshore processing centres have access to durable solutions;
4. train border crossing and detention centre officials to treat displaced persons with dignity and respect for their human rights. This includes ensuring all asylum seekers have access to essential healthcare, psychosocial support, legal assistance and protective services;
5. ensure children are never detained, even for the purpose of assessing legal status;
6. end mandatory detention of refugees and asylum seekers, except for initial health, security and identity screening;
7. encourage states in the Asia-Pacific region to ratify the Refugee Convention and its Protocol and build regional capacity to act in accordance with it; and
8. support the UN Secretary-General's campaign against xenophobia,⁶ including by:
 - a) improving policies promoting inclusion and integration of refugees, such as access to education, health care, justice and language training; and
 - b) rejecting political rhetoric that stigmatises refugees or uses inaccurate or criminalising terminology.

World Vision Australia calls on all states, including Australia to:

1. work with and provide financial support to refugee-hosting countries to prevent the reversal of development gains and ensure that affordable, quality services, including health, housing and education, can be provided to refugees on a sustainable basis, without compromising the local population's quality of access to public services or exacerbating tensions between communities;

2. work with host governments and other donors to ensure that all refugees and internally displaced persons have access to basic services, regardless of their location or legal status;
3. commit to preventing and resolving conflicts and instability and increase international assistance for conflict prevention, peacebuilding, good governance, and strengthening the rule of law;
4. meaningfully address violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law;
5. share responsibility for hosting displaced populations by significantly increasing the number and range of legal pathways for admission and resettlement of refugees;
6. support the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and work collaboratively and in good faith with other states to develop a Global Compact for Refugees, based on the principles of protection and responsibility sharing;⁷ and
7. involve displaced populations and hosting communities in the development of durable solutions and allow them the opportunity to contribute to decisions affecting them.

World Vision Australia calls on governments hosting refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and people seeking asylum, and responding agencies to:

1. ensure freedom of movement for displaced people and provide timely, accessible, and clear information on access procedures and requirements at points of entry into new areas;
2. provide timely, accessible, and clear information about rights and protection assistance and access to legal assistance;
3. ensure safe, unimpeded and impartial access to essential services, including safe shelter, food, emergency items, water, sanitation and hygiene, primary healthcare, and protection;
4. protect displaced children from exploitation and abuse during and following transit by mainstreaming child protection into immediate and longer-term responses to displacement; and
5. expand access to markets and livelihood opportunities and access to quality education for displaced populations, allowing them to be productive and self-sufficient members of their new communities, whether their situations are temporary, semi-permanent or permanent.

[For more detailed protection recommendations, see WVI's [Forced Displacement Policy](#)]

Background

In 2016, there are over 65 million forcibly displaced people in the world, the highest rate of displacement since World War II.⁸ Over half these people are children.⁹ While different legal terms - refugees,¹⁰ internally displaced people (IDPs),¹¹ and people seeking asylum¹² - are used, the feature uniting these 65 million people is that they have all been forced to flee their homes searching for safety. If they were a nation, they would make up the 21st largest country in the world.

Displacement is a symptom of the current scale of protracted conflicts globally and the lack of political will to resolve them and share responsibility for their humanitarian consequences. Over half of the world's registered refugees come from just three countries: Syria (4.9 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and Somalia (1.1 million).¹³ The average refugee spends 17 years in limbo before they can safely return home or find refuge in another country.¹⁴

The international community is at an impasse in its response to the global displacement crisis. As countries increasingly implement closed border policies, those least able to deliver meaningful protection (the least developed states bordering conflict areas) increasingly bear the responsibility of hosting displaced people.

Practical solutions and concrete commitments to protect displaced people are needed. All states must assume their fair share of responsibilities to address this global crisis. Solutions should:

- put children at the centre;
- recognise that the primary barrier to the development of durable solutions is political;¹⁵
- actively counter the narrative depicting displaced populations as "burdens";
- involve displaced people and their host communities, including children, in developing solutions to the displacement crisis.

Key resources & References

Key Resources

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf>

United Nations, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998*, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

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General Assembly Resolution 71/1 (2016) (New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants), A/RES/71/1, available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1%20. Further information on the General Assembly summit available at: <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration>.

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Bob Douglas, Claire Higgins, Arja Keski-Nummi, Jane McAdam and Travers McLeod, *Beyond the Boats: Building an Asylum and Refugee Policy for the Long Term*, 2014, available at: http://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Beyond-the-boats_LoRes.pdf.

Elizabeth Ferris, *In search of commitments: The 2016 refugee summits*. UNSW Andrew and Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, Policy Brief 3, 2016, available at: http://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/Policy_Brief_3_A4_final.pdf.

Refugee Council of Australia, *Thinking beyond offshore processing*, 2016, available at: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Offshore-processing_Recommendations.pdf.

Refugee Council of Australia, *Australia's response to a world in crisis*, 2016, available at: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/2016-17-Intake-submission-FINAL.pdf>.

Refugee Council of Australia, *Improving refugee protection in Asia-Pacific: How Australia can make a practical difference*, 2015, available at: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Improving-Refugee-Protection-in-Asia-Pacific_20_Jul_2015.pdf.

Save the Children and UNICEF, *At What Cost? The Human, Economic and Strategic Cost of Australia's Asylum Seeker Policies and the Alternatives*, 2016, available at: <http://www.unicef.org.au/Upload/UNICEF/Media/Documents/At-What-Cost-Report.pdf>.

Key Resources

¹ World Vision Australia's position reflects the World Vision International, *Forced Displacement Policy Position*, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/disaster-management/publication/forced-displacement-policy-position>

² The importance of promoting self-reliance has been expounded in, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), *Framework for durable solutions for refugees and persons of concern*, 2003, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/partners/partners/3f1408764/framework-durable-solutions-refugees-persons-concern.html>; Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, *Protracted Refugee Situations, 30th Meeting of the Standing Committee, para 4 and 40. Minutes*, 2004 available at: <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4a54bc00d.pdf>; United Nations Secretary-General's Report, *In safety and dignity: Addressing large movements of refugees and migrants*, 2016, available at: http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/in_safety_and_dignity_-_addressing_large_movements_of_refugees_and_migrants.pdf; Refugee Council of Australia, *Economic, Civic, and Social Contributions of Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants - A Literature Review*, 2010, p.7, available at: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/Contributions_of_refugees.pdf; Nicholas Crawford, John Cosgrave, Simone Haysom and Nadine Walicki, *Protracted displacement: Uncertain paths to self-reliance in exile*, ODI Humanitarian Policy Group Commissioned Report, 2015, available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2015/20150930-201509-global-protracted-displacement-odi/201509-global-protracted-displacement-odi-FULL-Report.pdf>.

³ See for example World Vision's programming in Syria and neighbouring countries, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2015%20Syria%20Response%20report%20-%20Bringing%20Hope%20to%20Forgotten%20Faces.pdf>; Iraq, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/iraq/about-us>; Sudan, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2015%20Annual%20Report%20.pdf>; South Sudan, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/South%20Sudan%20Annual%20Report%202015%20re-done.pdf>; The Democratic Republic of Congo, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/WVI%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%202013%2004062014.pdf>; The Central African Republic, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/emergencies/central-african-republic>; Niger, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/niger>; Chad, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/chad>; Afghanistan, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/afghanistan/article/world-vision-provides-health-services-internally-displaced-families-afghanistan>; Nepal, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/nepal>; and Vanuatu, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/vanuatu>

⁴ Notably under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, the 1974 Safety of Life at Sea Convention, the Migrant Smuggling Protocol to the UN Transnational Organised Crime Convention, and the 2004 International Maritime Organization's Guidelines on the Treatment of Persons Rescued at Sea.

⁵ Australia's non-refoulement obligations are found in the Refugee Convention, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture, as well as under customary international law.

⁶ Australia committed to combating xenophobia, racism and discrimination against refugees and migrants on the 19 September 2016 General Assembly Resolution, 'The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants' (A/RES/71/1).

⁷ See Annex I of the 'New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants' (A/RES/71/1).

⁸ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015, 2016*, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7>

⁹ 51 per cent of the refugee population in 2015 were children. 98,400 asylum applications were lodged by unaccompanied or separated children in 2015; the highest number on record since United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) started collecting such data in 2006. These children came from 78 countries but were overwhelming from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Syria and Somalia (UNHCR, *Global Trends, 2016*).

¹⁰ There are currently more than 21 million people registered as refugees: 16.1m under UNHCR's mandate and 5.2m Palestinian refugees registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) (See, UNHCR 2016, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015, 2016*). According to the Refugee Convention, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>, a refugee is a person who is outside their own country and is unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

¹¹ There were 40.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs) at the end of 2015 (See, UNHCR, 2016 *Global Trends, 2016*). IDPs have been displaced from their home but have not crossed an international border and therefore are not entitled to claim protection under the *Refugee Convention*. IDPs are entitled to protection from their government in accordance with the government's international obligations and domestic law. See the United Nations, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

¹² There were 3.2 million asylum-seekers at the end of 2015 (See, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends, 2016*). The term asylum seekers refers to a person seeking refugee protection outside their home country whose application for protection has not yet been determined under an official process – either by a United Nations agency or domestic government. See: <http://www.unhcr.org/asylum-seekers.html>

¹³ 54 per cent of refugees come from these three countries: See, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends, 2016*.

¹⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, *Refugee Agency, 2016*, available at: www.unrefugees.org/what-we-do/.

¹⁵ Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (2004) Protracted Refugee Situations, 30th Meeting of the Standing Committee, para 4 and 40. Minutes available at: <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4a54bc00d.pdf>.