

Centre for International
Governance Innovation

WORLD
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WORLD REFUGEE COUNCIL INTERIM REPORT

Transforming the Global Refugee System

Solidarity, Humanity and Accountability



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Governance Innovation

The logo for the World Refugee Council, featuring a purple square with a white border containing the text "WORLD REFUGEE COUNCIL" and a purple geometric shape to its right.

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CIGI Masthead

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Note from the Chair

The World Refugee Council (WRC) is an independent global body comprising 30 political leaders, policy advisers, academic experts and civil society actors from around the world. The Council is systematically engaging directly with refugees in the regions where they live and with researchers and practitioners worldwide. Drawing on this experience, the Council is developing innovative ideas that seek to stimulate transformative change in the way the world perceives and responds to refugee populations. The Council's first three formal sessions have taken place in Geneva (June 2017), Amman (September 2017) and Berlin (November 2017). Dar es Salaam is next, followed by specialized workshops in Asia and the Americas in the coming months.

Halfway through its work plan of on-the-ground enquiry and academic research, the Council notes a worsening zeitgeist, marked by a widespread dearth of constructive leadership and a persistent deficit in vision and imagination. The international regime suffers from a glaring lack of accountability at every point in the refugee cycle. It also suffers from the unfairness manifest in the imbalanced sharing of the global responsibility for refugees, and from the related chronic shortfall of funding — even as donations increase. These grave problems point to a conspicuous need for international, multi-stakeholder governance innovation and reform. The current approach is neither politically nor financially sustainable, nor does it afford refugees the protections and prospects that basic human dignity demands.

At the same time, the Council also notes positive developments, including the growing recognition of the humanitarian-development continuum and the importance of assisting local host

communities alongside refugees; the actual and potential contributions of the World Bank and regional development banks and institutions; the effectiveness of civil society organizations; and the potential of private investment and technology to bring economic benefit to refugees and citizens alike and to transform the current toxic narrative around refugees into a positive one. Reforming the world's approach to refugees, who constitute about one-third of one percent of the global population, is a manageable challenge for responsible leadership. Success would also make an important contribution to international peace and stability. Further, success would likely suggest lessons for the world's response to population flows more generally.

At its core, the world is not suffering from a refugee crisis, but from a leadership crisis — a deficit of vision and imagination and, most fundamentally, of humanity and solidarity.

As with all governance challenges, the crisis will respond to sound political leadership and enhanced accountability — at the local, regional and global levels.

The Council offers this interim report, and other discussion and research papers, to raise awareness of these issues and to stimulate ideas for reform that will transform lives.

Lloyd Axworthy
Chair, World Refugee Council

Introduction

Against the backdrop of large-scale movements of refugees and migrants to Europe in 2015 and horrific loss of life among refugees traversing the Mediterranean and the Aegean seas to escape violence and despair, the United Nations convened the High-Level Plenary on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants. On September 19, 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was unanimously adopted by all 193 members of the United Nations. The Declaration reaffirmed commitments to refugee protection and to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (which was not a foregone conclusion) and called for the development of a new global compact on refugees based on the comprehensive refugee response framework included as Annex I of the New York Declaration (UN General Assembly [UNGA] 2016b). The New York Declaration did not, however, make significant new inroads in concretizing the principles of accountability and responsibility sharing, addressing internal displacement or questioning the basic system by which financing collective engagement is secured.

The WRC was created to build on the momentum generated by the New York Summit and to develop bold approaches to transform the current refugee system, focusing on the issues of accountability, responsibility sharing and governance, and finance. It will also explore how lessons can be applied to both refugees and the all too often forgotten internally displaced persons (IDPs), and how technology and process innovation can improve models and approaches.

The Challenge

The current refugee situation is grim. Walls and fences are built along borders that once were freely crossed. Desperate people set out on dangerous journeys in search of safety and protection, and many thousands die in the attempt. In some cases, such as in Syria, people are trapped, unable to escape the violence in their country. In cases where borders remain open to those fleeing conflict, host

governments who have responded humanely now feel abandoned by the international community.

Solutions are ever more elusive. Behind the escalating numbers of refugees is the reality that new refugee movements are piled on to already scandalously high numbers of refugees who continue to live in exile. In some cases, a third generation of refugees is growing up in refugee camps. Of the 65.6 million displaced in 2016, 10.7 million were newly displaced — joining over 50 million who had been displaced before (UNGA 2017, para. 1). As wars grind on, these people's prospects of returning home diminish. And as refugees stay longer in neighbouring countries, their welcome wears out. Governments of most front-line host countries do not want refugees to stay. The fiction that refugees are a temporary phenomenon flies in the face of evidence that most refugee situations last for years, and many for decades. As a consequence, refugees are forced to depend on humanitarian aid that is almost never enough to meet their needs. Opportunities for refugees to be resettled in third countries are decreasing, and alternative solutions are equally scarce.

The international refugee system, constructed in the aftermath of World War II, is strained to the breaking point. The 1951 Refugee Convention, the bedrock of the system, is flouted by governments that once prided themselves as champions of international law. Governments have become more creative in their efforts to keep refugees from arriving on their territories and claiming asylum. In some cases, deals are made with other countries to prevent would-be asylum seekers from reaching their territory. In other cases, refugees are intercepted en route and diverted to small islands, where they are detained for years. Deterrence measures — detaining asylum seekers, denying benefits to recognized refugees, blocking family unification — have become common. It is important to remember that while governments have the right to determine who enters their territory, it is a fundamental human right to seek asylum from violence and danger. Increasingly, efforts to exercise this human right are being criminalized.

But, in spite of the increasing levels of displacement, the world's refugee crisis is not truly a crisis attributable to too many refugees. It is a crisis about too little leadership, and a deficit of vision and imagination. The crisis is a political crisis that will respond to sound political leadership and enhanced accountability — at the local, regional and global levels.

At the problem's core is an almost universal lack of political accountability. Government leaders are able to act with impunity when their actions displace hundreds of thousands of people. Other leaders are also unaccountable when they shirk responsibility, close borders and condemn those in search of refuge to suffering and often death. Finally, while the international refugee system was premised on the idea that international cooperation is essential to ensuring the safety, dignity and rights of refugees, principles of solidarity, cooperation, and collective responsibility seem to have been abandoned, and there are no repercussions for governments that do not contribute to solutions.

The responsibility for refugee movements resides mainly with political leaders in countries of origin. For example, in South Sudan, the struggle for power between two corrupt politicians has resulted in the flight of over two million people¹ into neighbouring countries and has put over one million at risk of starvation (Medinick 2017). The intervention of foreign powers in conflicts such as Yemen and Syria has prolonged the violence. In Myanmar, decades-long persecution of the Rohingya ethnic group erupted in a spasm of violence in mid-2017 that led hundreds of thousands to flee for their lives.

And the international humanitarian system is stretched to the edges of its capacity. Donor countries are running dry as they seek to respond to a continuing series of appeals for funding as the number of refugees grows. The inability of the international community to react reliably to refugee flows has consequences not only for refugees and the countries that host them, but also for the multilateral system itself and, more broadly, the global order. The multilateral system, already under threat, is further challenged by its inability to respond collectively to the large movement of refugees and to find solutions for those already displaced. When governments act unilaterally to prevent refugees from arriving at their borders, and other governments then question their own commitments to receiving refugees, the whole system is weakened.

The World Refugee Council

Established in May 2017 by the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and operating under the leadership of former Canadian Foreign Minister the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, along with Co-Chairs Hina Jilani, human rights activist and member of The Elders; His Excellency Jakaya Kikwete, former president of the United Republic of Tanzania; and Rita Süßmuth, former president of the German federal parliament, the WRC is seeking to offer bold strategic thinking about how the international community can respond effectively to the political leadership crisis at the root of the refugees' plight.

The Council is uniquely comprised of 30 political practitioners, innovators and civil society actors drawn from regions around the world in order to combine the experiences and perspectives of each field into a single conversation (Box 1). This project is supported by the Government of Canada, the International Development Research Centre, the MacArthur Foundation, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Carnegie Foundation and others.

Over 18 months, the WRC is conducting its work through a series of meetings (Box 2) in refugee-affected countries, complemented by subject-specific workshops and a robust set of commissioned research papers.² The final report will be a product of those deliberations.

From the beginning, the WRC has sought to complement the United Nations' reform efforts. The New York Declaration (UNGA 2016b), endorsed by all 193 members, committed UN member states to adopt in 2018 both a new global compact on refugees and a global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is taking the lead in designing the global compact on refugees, the plan to be presented to the UNGA in the fall of 2018. The WRC seeks to learn from and to complement these efforts as an independent body unbound by the need to achieve consensus among all 193 UN member states. As a result, the WRC will work to bring forward bold and creative solutions to address the global refugee crisis that can meet the needs of civil society and international governance systems while also acknowledging political pressures.

¹ See the "South Sudan Situation – Informal Sharing Portal" at <http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/regional.php>.

² Individual research papers will be made available on the WRC website as they are completed and later collected in a volume for publication.

Box 1: WRC Members and Affiliations

Executives

- Chair the Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Canada)
- Co-Chair Hina Jilani (Pakistan)
- Co-Chair H. E. Jakaya Kikwete (Tanzania)
- Co-Chair Rita Süßmuth (Germany)
- Deputy Chair Paul Heinbecker (Canada)
- Director Fen Osler Hampson (Canada)
- Susan Martin (United States)
- Marwan Muasher (Jordan)
- Devota Nuwe (Uganda)
- Ratna Omidvar (Canada)
- George Papandreou (Greece)
- Surin Pitsuwan (Thailand) (deceased)
- Hardeep Singh Puri (India) (resigned to join Indian federal cabinet)

Councillors

- Pamela Aall (United States)
- H. E. Shaima Al Zarooni (United Arab Emirates)
- Alexander Betts (United Kingdom)
- Aya Chebbi (Tunisia)
- Sarah Cliffe (United States)
- Jérôme Elie (International Council of Voluntary Agencies)
- Jonathan Fanton (United States)
- Leymah Gbowee (Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Liberia)
- Per Heggenes (IKEA Foundation)
- Güven Sak (Turkey)
- Eduardo Stein (Guatemala)
- Jessie Thomson (Canada)

Special Advisers/Secretariat

- Special Adviser Elizabeth Ferris
- Research Director James Milner
- Special Adviser the Hon. Allan Rock
- Special Adviser Andrew S. Thompson
- Project Manager Hayley Avery
- Research Associate Bushra Ebadi
- Communications Adviser Madison Cox

Box 2: Meetings of the WRC

- First Meeting of the WRC: June 12, 2017, Geneva, Switzerland
- Second Meeting of the WRC: September 18, 2017, Amman, Jordan
- Third Meeting of the WRC: November 12-13, 2017, Berlin, Germany
- Fourth Meeting of the WRC: February 12-13, 2018, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Following each meeting, a report is posted on the WRC website at www.worldrefugeecouncil.org/events.

Background

Unpacking the Numbers

While it has been common to cite the unprecedented levels of displacement in the world today, it is important to look more deeply into the statistics. Presently, there are:

- 17.2 million refugees under the UNHCR's mandate;
- 5.3 million Palestinian refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) mandate;
- 40.3 million IDPs; and
- 2.8 million asylum seekers (UNHCR 2017).

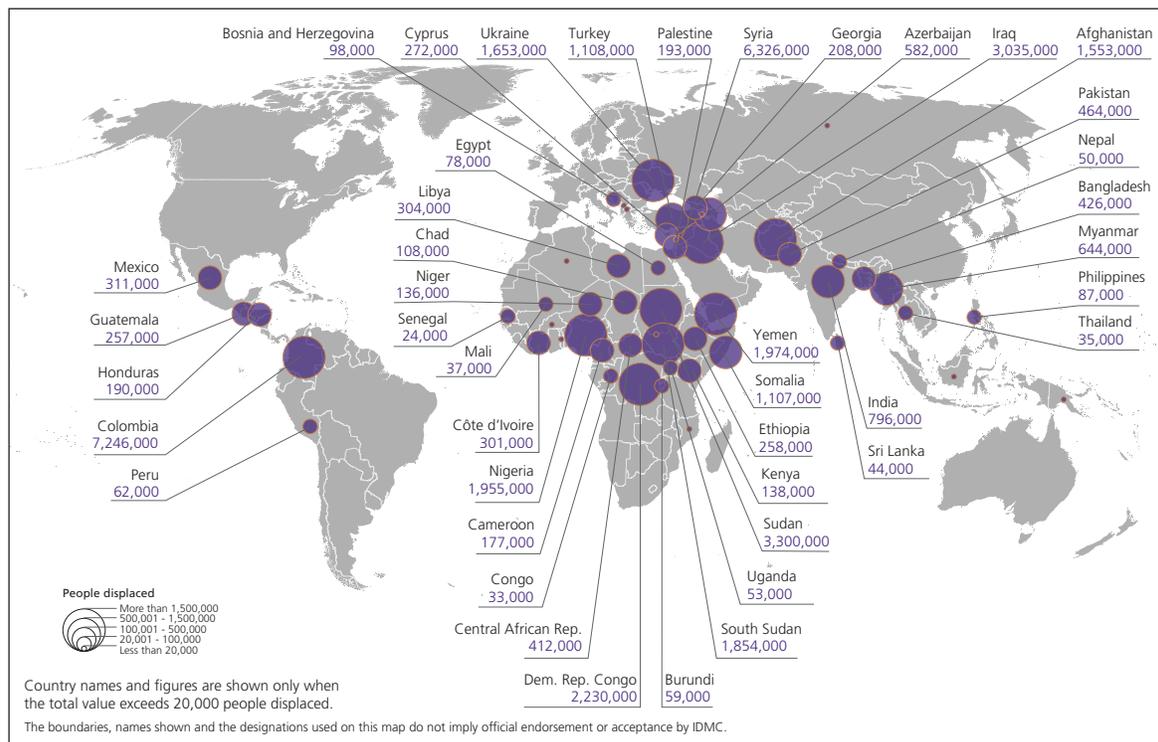
Together, the total number of displaced persons — both within and across borders — is 65.6 million people. This is a large number — the largest number since World War II. But after looking more closely at the numbers, we see that there were in fact a greater number of refugees under the UNHCR's mandate

in the early 1990s. The increase in the number of Palestinian refugees — from 1.4 million in 1970 to 5.3 million in 2016 — has been largely due to natural demographic increases. There have been no new groups of Palestinian refugees under the UNRWA's mandate since the 1967 Six Day War, and there have been no solutions for Palestinian refugees.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the largest increase in the cumulative number of the world's displaced has been in those people displaced within the borders of their own countries — known as IDPs (Box 3). Some of this increase is due to greater awareness of internal displacement and to better collection of data on IDPs. But some of the increase is likely due to the fact that as borders have closed, people fleeing for their lives have been forced to remain within the borders of their countries where they are often at greater risk than those who find safety in nearby countries. The number of IDPs displaced by conflict — more than 40 million — is almost twice the number of refugees.

There seems to be a clear relationship between internal displacement and refugee flows. In fact, it is likely that many of today's IDPs are tomorrow's

Figure 1: People Internally Displaced by Conflict



Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre ([IDMC] 2017). Reprinted with permission.

Box 3: Definition of Key Terms

A **refugee** is defined in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol as “a person who...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”^{*} The 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention expands the definition of refugee beyond those fleeing persecution to those who flee their homelands “owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order.”^{**} Similarly, the Cartagena Declaration (UNHCR 1984) and the European Union’s Subsidiary Protection^{***} expand international protection to a broader set of beneficiaries.

Asylum seekers are people seeking sanctuary in a country other than their own and awaiting a decision about their status (UNHCR 2017).

Internally displaced persons are defined in the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border” (UN Economic and Social Council 1998, Annex, para 2).

* UNHCR (2010, art. 1). Note that the original definition has additional text: “who...as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing...” (ibid.).

** See UNHCR (1969, art. 1, para. 2). Note that the original definition has additional text.

*** European Union (Subsidiary Protection) Regulations 2017, S.I. No. 409, *Irish Statute Book*, September 26. www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/409/made/en/print.

refugees. Refugees who return to their countries often become IDPs — often unable to return to their communities and forced to live on the margins of large cities. However, while it is recognized that refugees need international help, the responsibility for protecting and assisting IDPs lies with “competent national authorities,” some of whom either caused or were complicit in the displacement in the first place. The international response to IDPs continues to be characterized by ad hoc responses, turf battles and — in spite of 12 years of humanitarian reform and the introduction of a new system for coordinating response (known as the “cluster system”) — unpredictability in international response to IDPs.

Those displaced by persecution, conflict, violence and widespread violations of human rights — already a formidable number of people — are among a larger number of people displaced by other causes, including disasters, the effects of climate change and development projects (Figure 2). Indeed, the IDMC reported in 2017 that more than 24 million people were newly displaced by disasters in 2016 (Figure 3); the IDMC estimates, based on models of future displacement, that every year another 14 million people on average will be displaced by sudden-onset disasters.³ It is likely that the effects of climate change will result in further displacement and also increase the potential for conflict in some regions.⁴ There are no recent statistics on the number of people displaced by development projects, such as the construction of dams and urban renewal projects; the most recent estimates are that at least 15 million people are displaced every year by such projects (Cernea 2006).

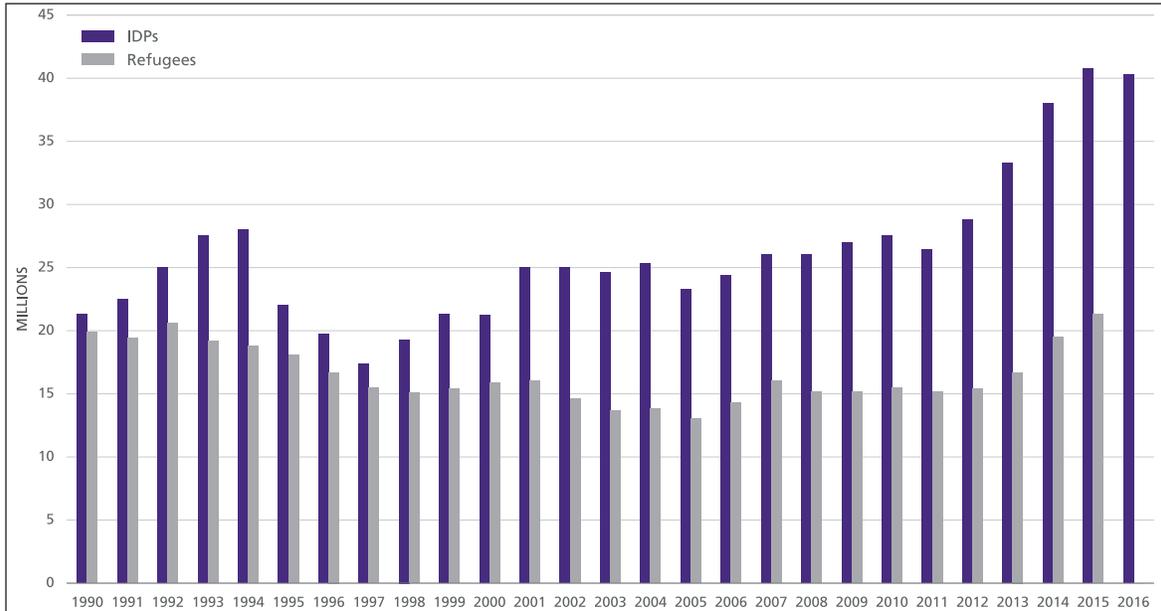
Although this report focuses only on those displaced by conflict — whether refugees, asylum seekers or IDPs — it is important to recognize that this movement is part of a larger flow of people displaced for other reasons, and within yet a larger movement of people migrating for economic, family and other reasons. In 2015, there were 244 million international migrants — an increase of 71 million (41 per cent) over the number of migrants in 2000⁵ — and the figure is expected to reach 405 million by 2050. Around half

3 See the IDMC’s Global Displacement Risk Model at www.internal-displacement.org/database/global-displacement-risk-model/?source=mailchimp.

4 See, for example, the UNHCR’s webpage on climate change: www.unhcr.org/en-us/climate-change-and-disasters.html.

5 Note that this figure includes refugees and asylum seekers. See UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015).

Figure 2: Number of IDPs and Refugees, 1990–2016



Source: IDMC (2017). Reprinted with permission.

of the world’s international migrants are women and around half are children. In spite of often alarmist rhetoric, it is also important to recognize that today’s international migrants represent just 3.3 percent of the world’s population, a slight increase over the 2.9 percent of the past decade (Connor 2016). The issue of migrants, although not directly addressed in this report, is important in the discussion, because migrants and refugees often use the same routes, and often the same smugglers, in their journeys across borders. Refugees make up fewer than one percent of the world’s 7.6 billion people.

Gender

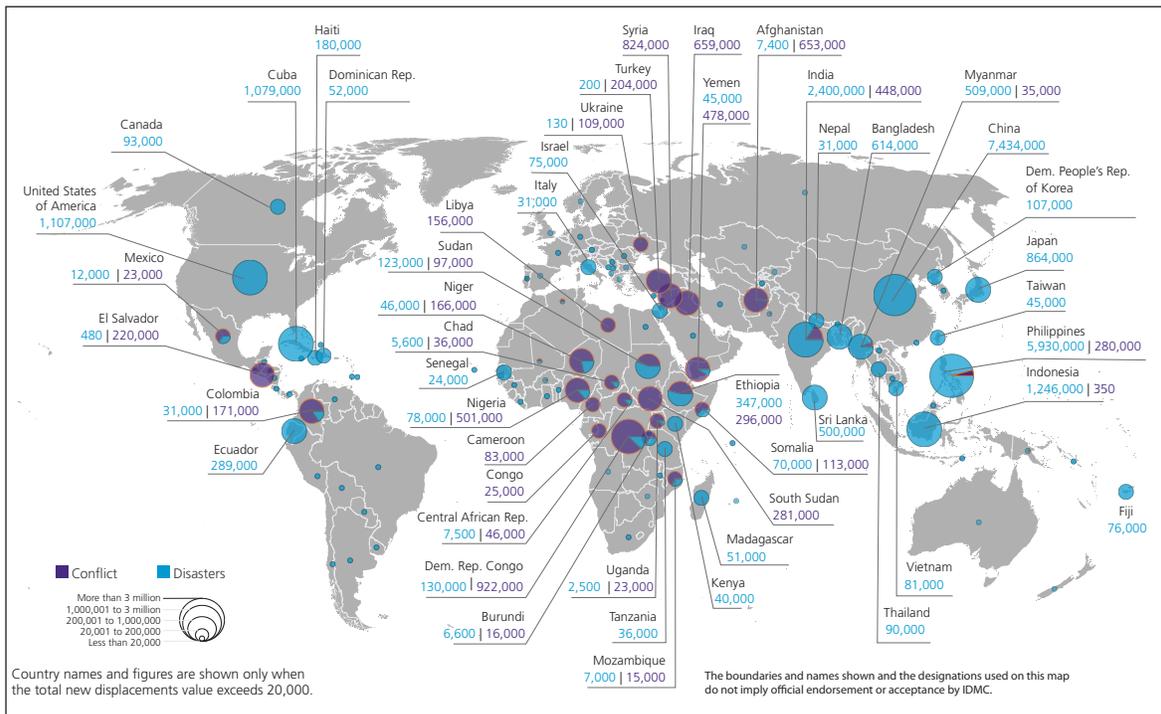
Most of the world’s refugees and IDPs — like most of the world’s population — are women and children. As Eileen Pittaway and Linda Bartolomei point out:

Despite significant international law and policy developed over the past 30 years the protection needs of refugee women and girls are seldom addressed. They still suffer endemic and systematic rape and sexual abuse and lack access to many of the protection measures and durable solutions that should be available to all refugees. Despite their contributions, knowledge and experience,

their voices are often silenced and their capacity ignored....Sexual and gender-based violence is endemic in all refugee situations. It occurs as part of the initial persecution, during flight, as they seek to cross borders, in countries of first asylum and often continues during resettlement. It includes systematic rape in conflict and post-conflict situations, rape as a method of control of community and of shaming the husbands and fathers of raped women and girls. Trafficking, forced marriage and domestic violence are common. Disabled women and young girls are often targeted for rape. Lesbian and transgender women are sometimes killed. Many women are forced to engage in survival sex to feed themselves and their families, and they face the additional stigma of being branded as a prostitute. (Pittaway and Bartolomei, forthcoming 2018)

At the same time, women and girls are leaders and champions in their communities, at the front lines of the displacement crisis. All too often, their full and meaningful participation is hampered by gender-blind and gender-discriminatory laws and policies.

Figure 3: New Displacements by Conflicts and Disasters in 2016



Source: IDMC (2017). Reprinted with permission.

Children and Youth

Children and youth, whether travelling alone or with their families, are at risk during their journeys, at borders, and as refugees and IDPs (Bhabha and Dottridge 2017). Like adults, many of those fleeing their countries do so because of fear of violence and persecution. Trauma experienced back home and during flight can have long-term effects. One 2015 study of Syrian refugee children in Turkey, for example, found that a staggering 79 percent of children had experienced someone in their family dying (Sirin and Rogers-Sirin 2015). The harrowing journeys they face en route are marked by violence, fear and exploitation.⁶ Too often, when they finally arrive in an area where they hope to find safety, they encounter instead unsympathetic reception policies and even detention. As displacement drags on, their opportunities for education become more limited and their hopes for the future fade (Box 4).

Box 4: Refugee Children and Education

The UNHCR's report *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis* (2016c) reports that, globally, refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than other children:

- Ninety-one percent of children worldwide are in primary school, versus only 50 percent of refugee children.
- Eighty-four percent of adolescents worldwide are in school, but only 22 percent of refugee adolescents.
- Thirty-four percent of young people worldwide are in post-secondary education. Just one percent of refugee young people are in post-secondary education.

⁶ See, for example, UNHCR's report *Children on the Run* (2016a).

Table 1: Refugee-hosting Countries

2014		2015		2016	
Turkey	1.6 million	Turkey	2.5 million	Turkey	2.9 million
Pakistan	1.5 million	Pakistan	1.6 million	Pakistan	1.4 million
Lebanon	1.15 million	Lebanon	1.1 million	Lebanon	1 million
Iran	950,000	Iran	979,400	Iran	979,400
Ethiopia	659,500	Ethiopia	736,100	Uganda	940,800
Jordan	654,100	Jordan	664,100	Ethiopia	791,600
Kenya	551,400	Kenya	553,900	Jordan	685,200
Chad	452,900	Uganda	477,200	Germany	669,500
Uganda	385,500	DR Congo	383,100	DR Congo	452,200
China	301,000	Chad	369,500	Kenya	451,000

Data sources: UNHCR (2015, 2016b, 2017).

Refugees: Not Distributed Equally around the World

As illustrated in Table 1, almost 85 percent of the world’s refugees presently live in the developing world. In 2016, just three countries accounted for more than half of the world’s refugees: Syria (5.5 million), Afghanistan (2.5 million) and South Sudan (1.4 million) (UNHCR 2017).

No government in the world wants refugees turning up, unannounced, on its borders. Even for countries with significant resettlement programs or that are major donors to refugee programs, the spontaneous arrival of asylum seekers — particularly in large numbers — raises questions of security, bureaucratic capacity and budgets. In this regard, it is illustrative that several individual European countries spend more on processing and receiving thousands of asylum seekers than the UNHCR spends for all the rest of the refugees in the world. For example, in 2015, Sweden spent US\$7.1 billion (€6 billion) on 163,000 asylum seekers (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2017). In comparison, the UNHCR’s budget for 2017 was US\$7.3 billion for the 61 million people of concern to the agency.⁷

Table 2 presents the number of people seeking asylum — or refugee status — in various countries of asylum. The figures on asylum represent refugees who arrive at a country’s border — or other point of entry — and request protection as refugees. This is a different process than resettlement (discussed further below) in which some countries agree to resettle refugees from their country of arrival. In some cases, countries such as Jordan and Lebanon have received large numbers of refugees but do not have formal asylum or refugee determination processes.

Resettlement

Resettlement has always only ever provided solutions for a tiny percentage of the world’s refugees. The willingness of the international community to resettle refugees from other countries has varied over time and in accord with the political interests of major powers. In 1956, 200,000 Hungarians poured across the border into neighbouring Austria. Within 10 weeks, almost 100,000 of those refugees had been resettled to third countries. Within two years, all 200,000 refugees had found solutions.⁸ Sadly, it seems that the international refugee system has regressed in its ability to find solutions for refugees since then. During the Cold War, resettlement was openly

⁷ Note that “people of concern” to the UNHCR include not only refugees and asylum seekers but also stateless populations and IDPs assisted by the UNHCR (McKinsey 2016).

⁸ Lister (2015). See also “Hungarian Refugees 1956” at Open Society Archives, www.osaarchivum.org/press-room/announcements/Hungarian-Refugees-1956.

Table 2: Asylum Claims per Receiving Country

2014		2015		2016	
Russia	274,700	Germany	441,900	Germany	722,400
Germany	173,100	United States	172,700	United States	262,000
United States	121,200	Sweden	156,400	Italy	123,000
Turkey	87,800	Russia	152,500	Turkey	78,600
Sweden	75,100	Turkey	133,300	France	78,400
South Africa	71,900	Austria	85,800	Greece	49,800
Italy	63,700	Italy	83,200	Austria	39,900
France	59,000	Hungary	74,200	United Kingdom	38,500
Hungary	41,000	France	74,200	South Africa	35,400
Uganda	32,400	South Africa	62,200	Hungary*	29,432
Total asylum claims, including all other countries	1,660,300		2,454,700		2,176,100

Data sources: UNHCR (2015, 2016b, 2017).

* The UNHCR data lists the 10 countries with the highest number of asylum claims in 2014 and 2015. It lists the top nine in 2016; a Google search by this report's researchers indicate that Hungary was likely the country ranking tenth that year.

used as a tool of foreign policy, with refugees from communist countries receiving resettlement opportunities in the West while refugees in other parts of the world did not. Later, the Indochina refugee crisis, through the Comprehensive Plan of Action, resettled more than two million refugees as part of a comprehensive approach to refugees, including returns and (to a limited extent) local settlement. Most observers see the willingness of countries outside the region to offer resettlement as being a key component of preserving asylum in the region (Betts 2006).

Since then, the number of countries offering resettlement has increased, although the number of places offered has not kept pace with the increasing number of refugees. Table 3 presents data on the number of resettled refugees by receiving countries in 2014 and 2015. In addition, a report from the Refugee Council of Australia (2017) indicates that in 2016, 189,000 refugees were resettled by 39 countries, with the United States receiving almost 97,000 of those. While the costs of resettling a refugee to a third country are much higher than providing aid in a neighbouring country, resettlement is a durable solution.

Refugees: Not in Camps and Not a Temporary Phenomenon

Most of the world's refugees do not live in camps but rather are dispersed among host communities. No one wants to live in camps or shelters for any length of time and the fact that refugees increasingly live in communities is generally a positive trend. Living in camps can deprive refugees of the dignity of being self-reliant and can distort relations with host communities. This direction was affirmed when the UNHCR in 2014 adopted a new policy on alternatives to camps (UNHCR 2014), making it clear that camps were to be the exception and used only on a temporary basis. And yet, refugees who do not reside in camps are often invisible. Within nations, at the municipal level, mayors and other local government authorities are often faced with responding to refugees without having the political and financial support they need to do so. Providing international assistance to refugees dispersed in urban areas is more complex than assisting refugees living in camps — requiring collaboration with a range of municipal authorities and agencies. For example, while humanitarian workers are experienced in digging boreholes to provide water to refugees

Table 3: Number of Resettled Refugees by Top Receiving Countries

2014		2015	
United States	73,000	United States	66,517
Canada	12,300	Canada	20,010
Australia	11,600	Australia	9,399
Sweden	2,000	Norway	2,383
Norway	1,300	Sweden	1,902
Finland	1,100	United Kingdom	1,864
		Finland	1,007
		New Zealand	808
		Austria	758
		Switzerland	641
Total, including other resettlement countries	105,200		107,051

Data sources: UNHCR (2015), Refugee Council of Australia (2016).

in camps, they face a different set of tasks to provide water to refugees in urban settings. In its meeting in Jordan in September 2017, the WRC heard compelling accounts of the difficulties in providing water to more than a million Syrian refugees in a country where water for Jordanian citizens is in perilously short supply. Contributing to Jordanian infrastructure could benefit both refugees and the communities that host them.

In 2016, about two-thirds of the world's refugees — 11.6 million people — were living in protracted situations.⁹ More than four million people are living in displacement situations that have lasted more than 20 years, such as Afghans in Pakistan (UNHCR 2017). And, of course, the displacement of Palestinian refugees has lasted for almost 70 years. As displacement drags on, solutions become more difficult. Most refugees and IDPs initially see their displacement as temporary and yearn to return home as soon as possible; but as the years go by, the desire to return diminishes, sometimes

because the hope that normalcy will ever return has died, and sometimes because they have begun new lives and to return would represent another uprooting. While humanitarian actors have generally honed their ability to respond quickly to emergency situations, their ability to manage long-term refugee situations is less impressive. Too often, their response is long-term care and maintenance operations, and international organizations act as surrogates, replacing state responsibility and letting governments off the hook (Crisp and Slaughter 2009). For IDPs displaced for many years — usually because conflicts have become frozen — solutions seem similarly distant (Kälin and Entwisle Chapuisat 2017).

Dangerous Journeys

Attention in recent years has focused on the large number of deaths of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean in search of protection. As grim as these statistics and images are, however, they represent the tip of the iceberg. Unlike legal norms mandating ships to provide assistance to people in distress at sea, there is no corresponding norm for rescuing refugees and migrants travelling

⁹ Protracted refugee situations are defined by the UNHCR as refugee populations of 25,000 or more that have lasted for five or more years (UNHCR 2017, 22).

overland, and it is likely that unknown thousands die every year crossing desolate deserts and other inhospitable terrain. As borders are fortified and become less accessible, migrants and asylum seekers alike take ever riskier journeys. More people are turning to smugglers to facilitate their travel, and more are being abandoned and exploited by those smugglers (Box 5).¹⁰ Even those who would qualify as refugees under the 1951 Convention are too often forced to turn over their savings and put their lives in the hands of exploitative criminal networks to access other countries to ask for asylum. Europol has estimated that 90 percent of irregular crossings of borders into the European Union through 2015 were facilitated by smugglers (cited in UN 2017, 4).

One of the challenges for those working with refugees is that because migrants and refugees often use the same routes, border officials are tasked with distinguishing between refugees in need of international protection and migrants who do not have valid refugee claims but have nonetheless experienced cruelty and exploitation en route.¹¹

Root Causes

Virtually every report on the “refugee crisis” acknowledges the importance of addressing the causes that displace people — war, conflicts, widespread human rights violations, inequality, poverty, greed and unscrupulous political leaders. Addressing those causes, however, is beyond the remit of humanitarian actors. Development agencies, with their focus on good governance and rule of law, are better placed to address some of the causes of displacement. But, fundamentally, it is the responsibility of the UN Security Council — charged with upholding peace and security — to prevent and resolve the conflicts that displace people. And by and large the Security Council has failed in this task. Difficulties of reaching agreement within the Security Council on conflicts such as those in Syria, South Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar and Nigeria, as well as lesser-known crises in the Central

10 The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that in the past two decades (1996–2016), at least 60,000 people have lost their lives trying to reach their destination (Brian and Laczko 2016, 1).

11 In 2016, UNHCR updated its “10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration”; see www.unhcr.org/the-10-point-plan-in-action.html. Note that this issue is also receiving considerable discussion in the context of the development of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, for example, see IOM (2017).

Box 5: Smuggling and Trafficking

Although smuggling and trafficking are often referred to together, they are two different phenomena. Trafficking is a crime against the person. Smuggling is a crime against the state. In practice, however, criminals can both smuggle and traffic people, using the same routes and means of transportation. People who initially contract a person to smuggle them across a border may end up in debt and forced into a trafficking situation.

Smuggling of migrants is defined as “procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.”**

Trafficking in persons is defined as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”**

* Article 3 of the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000; reprinted in UN [2004, Annex III]).

** Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (reprinted in UN [2004, Annex II]).

African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, have meant that the humanitarian community has been faced with dealing with the human casualties of these wars. Efforts to develop early-warning systems have improved but are, so far, unaccompanied by early action. Peacekeeping forces have increasingly sought to protect civilians, support humanitarian actors and prevent the escalation of conflicts. But they have been unable to prevent conflicts from intensifying and people from fleeing their homes and their communities.

Increasing Xenophobia and Islamophobia

While there has never been a golden age of tolerance and multiculturalism toward refugees — at least not in the past century — the toxic narrative around refugees has reached epic levels in recent years. This is due in large part to political leaders' and the tabloid press's conflation of refugee movements with terrorism, and to the increasing securitization of migration issues generally. Further, the fear of Muslims and in particular of Muslim refugees seems impervious to analysis of facts and indeed, in some countries, there is a rejection of objective facts. The perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks were of Saudi Arabian origin — and yet the backlash against Muslims has not centred on Saudi Arabia but on other countries, notably Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

The rise of far-right political movements is but one indication of the growth of xenophobia; in fact, the whole debate about migration and refugees has moved to the right, with mainstream politicians in some countries building their careers around the simplistic premise that keeping foreigners at bay will protect citizens, national identities and cultures. But opposition to migrants and refugees is also found among left-leaning organizations, such as labour unions in many countries that are not in favour of welcoming migrants or refugees. The polarization of politics and the loss of a rational centre in many countries makes it difficult to chart a way forward.

This xenophobia takes different forms in different countries. While perhaps most visible in the United States and Europe, it is also apparent in countries such as South Africa and Australia, and in Myanmar — where the Rohingya who have lived in the country for generations are still depicted as illegal Bangladeshi migrants.

“In most cases, the actions needed to address the causes of large movements of people across international borders are well-known. New lists of recommendations are not necessary. Instead, mobilization of the political will and the resources to implement decisions of the international community in the General Assembly, the Security Council and other international forums are needed. Rather than ‘preventing’ large movements of refugees and migrants, the factors that force refugees and migrants to abandon their homes and communities must be addressed.”

(UNGA 2016a, 14)

Research indicates that xenophobic attitudes are difficult to change (Misago, Freemantle and Landau 2015, 17). At its meeting in Berlin in November 2017, the WRC considered a paper synthesizing the literature on xenophobia, which had been prepared for the meeting. Its author, Sarah Deardorff Miller, depicted the extraordinary roles played by political leaders in fomenting xenophobia among the public. Once again, the role of leadership in confronting racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia is paramount, and the need for accountability is acute. As Miller concluded, while educational programs and outreach efforts “are valuable in many ways, they do little to reduce xenophobic acts. Instead, it is argued that political will and sustained and coordinated interventions are needed to address the roots of xenophobia” (Miller, forthcoming 2018). The Berlin meeting also heard reports that young people tend to be more welcoming of foreigners and less xenophobic.

The issue of xenophobia not only affects refugees and migrants but challenges broader societal questions around pluralism and

diversity, fundamental principles of democracy and the very nature of the nation-state.

Positive Developments

While there is a preponderance of evidence that the global refugee system is overstretched and that those fleeing conflict and human rights violations have a hard time finding the protection they need, there are some positive signs. Uganda has responded generously and humanely to more than one million refugees from South Sudan, offering them 900 square metres of land, a work permit and the opportunity to remain as long as they need to (Titz and Feck 2017). Civil society organizations have often displayed an outpouring of support for refugees — even as their governments have adopted restrictive policies. New models of support for host countries have been tried — such as the Jordan and Lebanon Compacts — that illustrate the readiness of governments to explore different ways of supporting host governments (Government of Jordan 2016; European Commission 2017). The increased willingness of the World Bank and other international actors to support refugee-hosting countries may well be a game-changer in the long-lamented humanitarian-development gap, unlocking more than three billion dollars of additional financing for refugees and their host communities. Technological innovations have flourished in the past decade, making the distribution of humanitarian relief more efficient, and enabling refugees to receive vital information and communicate with each other in unprecedented ways.¹²

Technology and process innovations offer exciting ways of improving operational response and also hold out the possibility of creating more participatory forms of governance, of imagining new models of responsibility sharing and of developing more transparent systems of accountability.

¹² See, for example, Betts, Bloom and Weaver (2015).

A Historic Opportunity in Turbulent Times

This is a significant moment for refugees. During the course of 2018, a new global compact on refugees will be developed and — if all goes well — adopted by the UNGA. This is an important process that will benefit refugees and one that the WRC heartily supports.

But that process will not even address — let alone resolve — the underlying structural failings of the refugee system. In particular, the 1951 Convention presumes humane motive, good-faith cooperation and voluntary financing sufficient to meet the needs of refugees — and none of these is remotely adequate today. Further, as the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata warned the world community, “There are no humanitarian solutions for humanitarian problems; their solutions are always political” (Ogata 2005, 25). As a consequence, the WRC is focusing its work on three glaring political gaps in our current global refugee system.

Glaring Political Gaps: An Agenda for the WRC’s Future Work

The first of several glaring gaps in the international refugee regime is the **lack of accountability** throughout the entire system. Upstream, political leaders who cause — or allow — conflicts to occur and displace vast numbers of people are not being held accountable. Downstream, donors who make generous pledges that do not materialize, governments that dodge their obligations under the 1951 Convention, and international organizations that measure their efforts by activities rather than outcomes are not being held accountable. The system must change to ensure more accountability by all actors. Those whose actions cause displacement must be held accountable by the UN Security Council and, where possible, the International Criminal Court. Governments’ response to refugees should be

judged by their peers, using a review mechanism by which the governments' performance, including making good on their pledges, are monitored regularly against their commitments.

The second glaring need is to **reform the way funding is mobilized**, which entails mustering the political will to generate funds to meet the needs of refugees and host countries alike. Financial support is rarely sufficient to cover the costs to public services, infrastructure, resources, the economy and the environment of host countries. Resettlement of refugees, while important, meets the needs of a minuscule percentage of the world's refugees. Ideas abound for raising more money — from introducing assessed contributions or levies on international transactions, to fostering refugee enterprise and confiscating perpetrators' assets — but the political will to act on these ideas is scant. A system built on voluntary contributions is unlikely ever to be enough.

Third, there is a glaring need for **governance reform and restructuring to share responsibility for refugees** equitably. Currently, neighbouring countries that receive refugees bear most of the costs for helping them. Governments need to recognize that protection and assistance of refugees is a common public good and thus a collective responsibility. All governments can and should contribute, on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities, and in keeping with their capacity to do so. Compliance with commitments needs to be monitored. Further, it is time to complement the UNHCR with a multi-stakeholder coalition of willing governments; the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and regional banks; the business community; civil society; and the media, both to respond when new flows of refugees occur and to resolve long-standing refugee situations.

These issues are interrelated. Enhanced accountability mechanisms must be central to new governance systems. Effective ways of sharing responsibility must be based on mutual accountability and reflected in reforms of our system of governance. And without the necessary funds, none of these will function properly.

The present system of financing humanitarian response is clearly no longer fit for purpose. The fact that the UNHCR relies on voluntary contributions means not only that it has to appeal for money for each major emergency, but that

donors have greater political clout. Reliance on voluntary contributions also creates tremendous inequities in response. Refugees in high-profile emergencies are more likely to receive needed assistance than are those in situations where Western media are not present. The move to bring development actors into the search for solutions is welcome but more fundamental change is needed. While changing the financial structure from voluntary to some form of assessed contributions seems like an obvious — although politically difficult — way of improving the system, other creative ideas need to be implemented as well.

Focusing on these three broad issues offers the opportunity to address some of the major weaknesses of the international system, including the inadequate response to IDPs and the need to ensure durable solutions for all refugees and IDPs, with a particular focus on protracted situations. (See Annex 1.)

These three political needs, while focused on state responsibility, are also applicable to other actors such as international organizations and civil society actors, including non-governmental organizations and the business sector. As more actors become involved in response to refugees and IDPs, how can they be held accountable for their actions? How can they become active participants in responsibility-sharing mechanisms? Is there a role for them to play in advocating for financial reform of the system as a whole?

The WRC will focus its efforts on these three issues — accountability, responsibility sharing and governance, and finance — but will also develop recommendations in other areas such as technology and process innovation, which offer not only exciting ways of improving operational response but also hold out the possibility of creating more participatory forms of governance, imagining new models of responsibility sharing and developing more transparent systems of accountability.

Acknowledgement

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Annex 1: Matrix for Refugee System Reform

Accountability	Governance and Responsibility Sharing	Finance
Central Questions		
How can governments be held responsible for displacing people? How can governments be held accountable for not acquitting their individual responsibility for protecting refugees?	How can governments more equitably and effectively share responsibility for refugees? What are the ways beyond financial support and resettlement to support host countries?	How can the system of financing collective response be improved? How can the financial costs of responding to refugees be shared more equitably? Is some form of assessed rather than voluntary contribution feasible?
Inclusion		
How are we accountable to affected communities?	How do our governance structures include women, youth, refugees, the private sector and civil society?	How can financial resources be used to support inclusive communities?
Technology and Innovation		
How can we use technology to increase transparency and accountability?	How can technology be used to measure responsibility sharing?	How can technology assist in mobilizing new sources of funds?
Internal Displacement		
How can governments be held accountable for displacing people? For failing to protect IDPs?	How can the international community more effectively support national governments in their response to IDPs? How does supporting IDPs differ from protecting refugees?	How can the funds necessary to support IDPs be mobilized and used?
Solutions for Protracted Situations		
How can governments of origin be held accountable for supporting solutions?	How can peacekeeping and peacebuilding mechanisms be more effectively mobilized? How can third countries take responsibility for finding solutions? Can resettlement be expanded? What measures other than resettlement and financing might be used?	How can needed financial support for solutions be mobilized and used?
The Role of the Private Sector		
How can the private sector become more fully engaged in all phases of responding to the needs of refugees?	In what respects and to what extent can the private sector be engaged as a partner in governance arrangements regarding refugees?	What kinds of innovative public-private-civil society partnerships can be further developed to respond to the needs of refugees?

Source: WRC.

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About CIGI

We are the Centre for International Governance Innovation: an independent, non-partisan think tank with an objective and uniquely global perspective. Our research, opinions and public voice make a difference in today's world by bringing clarity and innovative thinking to global policy making. By working across disciplines and in partnership with the best peers and experts, we are the benchmark for influential research and trusted analysis.

Our research programs focus on governance of the global economy, global security and politics, and international law in collaboration with a range of strategic partners and support from the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, as well as founder Jim Balsillie.

À propos du CIGI

Au Centre pour l'innovation dans la gouvernance internationale (CIGI), nous formons un groupe de réflexion indépendant et non partisan doté d'un point de vue objectif et unique de portée mondiale. Nos recherches, nos avis et nos interventions publiques ont des effets réels sur le monde d'aujourd'hui car ils apportent de la clarté et une réflexion novatrice pour l'élaboration des politiques à l'échelle internationale. En raison des travaux accomplis en collaboration et en partenariat avec des pairs et des spécialistes interdisciplinaires des plus compétents, nous sommes devenus une référence grâce à l'influence de nos recherches et à la fiabilité de nos analyses.

Nos programmes de recherche ont trait à la gouvernance dans les domaines suivants : l'économie mondiale, la sécurité et les politiques mondiales, et le droit international, et nous les exécutons avec la collaboration de nombreux partenaires stratégiques et le soutien des gouvernements du Canada et de l'Ontario ainsi que du fondateur du CIGI, Jim Balsillie.

About the World Refugee Council

There are more than 21 million refugees worldwide. Over half are under the age of 18. As a growing number of these individuals are forced to flee their homelands in search of safety, they are faced with severe limitations on the availability and quality of asylum, leading them to spend longer in exile today than ever before.

The current refugee system is not equipped to respond to the refugee crisis in a predictable or comprehensive manner. When a crisis erupts, home countries, countries of first asylum, transit countries and destination countries unexpectedly find themselves coping with large numbers of refugees flowing within or over their borders. Support from the international community is typically ad hoc, sporadic and woefully inadequate.

Bold Thinking for a New Refugee System

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is leading a consensus-driven effort to produce a new Global Compact for refugees in 2018. The World Refugee Council (WRC), established in May 2017 by the Centre for International Governance Innovation, is intended to complement its efforts.

The WRC seeks to offer bold strategic thinking about how the international community can comprehensively respond to refugees based on the principles of international cooperation and responsibility sharing. The Council is comprised of thought leaders, practitioners and innovators drawn from regions around the world and is supported by a research advisory network.

The WRC will explore advances in technology, innovative financing opportunities and prospects for strengthening existing international law to craft and advance a strategic vision for refugees and the associated countries.

The Council will produce a final report grounded by empirical research and informed by an extensive program of outreach to governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society. The Council aims to have concluded its work by early 2019.

À propos du Conseil mondial pour les réfugiés

Il y a en ce moment dans le monde plus de 21 millions de réfugiés, et plus de la moitié d'entre eux ont moins de 18 ans. En outre, de plus en plus de personnes sont forcées de quitter leur pays natal et partent à la recherche d'une sécurité, et elles sont alors confrontées aux limites importantes qui existent quant aux possibilités d'accueil et à la qualité de ce dernier. À cause de cette situation, les réfugiés passent maintenant plus de temps que jamais auparavant en exil.

En ce moment, le système de protection des réfugiés ne permet pas de réagir adéquatement à la crise des réfugiés d'une façon planifiée et globale. Quand une crise éclate, les pays de premier asile, les pays de transit et les pays de destination finale se retrouvent sans l'avoir prévu à devoir composer avec un grand nombre de réfugiés qui arrivent sur leur territoire, le traversent ou en partent. Et le soutien fourni dans ce contexte par la communauté internationale est en règle générale ponctuel, irrégulier et nettement inadéquat.

Des idées audacieuses pour un nouveau système de protection des réfugiés

Le Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés (HCR) dirige des efforts découlant d'un consensus et visant à instaurer un nouveau « pacte mondial pour les réfugiés » en 2018. Mis sur pied en mai 2017 par le Centre pour l'innovation dans la gouvernance internationale (CIGI), le Conseil mondial pour les réfugiés (CMR) veut compléter ces efforts.

Le CMR vise à proposer une réflexion stratégique audacieuse sur la manière dont la communauté internationale peut réagir de façon globale aux déplacements de réfugiés, et ce, en se fondant sur les principes de la coopération internationale et du partage des responsabilités. Formé de leaders, de praticiens et d'innovateurs éclairés provenant de toutes les régions du globe, le CMR bénéficie du soutien d'un réseau consultatif de recherche.

Le CMR examinera les progrès techniques, les occasions de financement novatrices ainsi que les possibilités pour ce qui est de renforcer le droit international et d'y intégrer une vision stratégique pour les réfugiés et les pays concernés.

Par ailleurs, le CMR produira un rapport final fondé sur des recherches empiriques et sur les résultats d'un vaste programme de sensibilisation ciblant les gouvernements, les organisations intergouvernementales et la société civile. Son objectif est de terminer son travail au début de 2019.

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