

# A perspective from the World Bank

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**The World Bank brings distinctive qualities to the role it can play in furthering the humanitarian to development transition and is significantly scaling up its engagement on forced displacement.**

The World Bank's value added is not in identifying and addressing the protection or short-term humanitarian needs of displaced persons, a focus which is well served by other agencies. Instead, as a development institution, the World Bank's lens is focused on addressing the longer-term, systemic impacts of displacement and addressing

them within the wider development context in which those needs are located.

Its current involvement includes the preparation or implementation of financing for projects addressing displacement and impacts on host communities in Azerbaijan, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Tanzania,



23 members of one family live in this community building in the Turkish village of Kanatli, having fled their homes in Kobani, Syria, 2015.

Uganda and Zambia, and reviewing and revising displacement policy such as assessing new directions for IDP subsidy schemes in Georgia.<sup>1</sup> It also includes a wide array of analytic work such as scoping out the development needs of the displaced across the Great Lakes Region of Africa<sup>2</sup> and Horn of Africa,<sup>3</sup> and poverty profiling of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan<sup>4</sup> and of the Malian displaced across West Africa.<sup>5</sup>

### Identifying a different set of needs

In Tanzania, the ability of long-term former refugees from Burundi to earn an income from their agricultural production is severely compromised by the geographic isolation of their settlements and lack of access to external markets. In this case, the need is to work with the government to open up access to markets through improved infrastructure connecting the settlements with the wider area.

In Turkey, one of the greatest challenges of the presence of Syrian refugees – causing some resentment among local Turkish families – is dramatic hikes in rents related to the increased demand for rental accommodation by Syrian refugees, combined with an already constrained housing market and an estimated housing supply lag of

approximately nine years at the lower end of the housing spectrum.<sup>6</sup> Here the need is to explore with the Government of Turkey options for responding to the housing needs of refugees – such as vouchers and rent subsidies – without causing distortion to the housing market for local Turkish families.

In Georgia, 45% of all internally displaced person (IDPs) live below the national poverty line as compared to 41% of non-IDPs. The greatest difference, however, is in the sources of household income, with 37% of IDPs' household income derived from subsidies compared to only 26% for non-IDPs. Since this relates to an inability to earn money through agricultural production due to a lack of access to land, the World Bank is working with the government to pilot increasing access to land for IDPs through rental contracts, an approach which creatively tackles constraints on IDPs' ability to own land through formal rights.<sup>7</sup>

### Applying a different set of tools

Including refugees, returnees and IDPs in **nationally representative poverty assessments** can generate disaggregated data to compare the poverty and living standards of the displaced with national

May 2016

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poverty levels and in comparison with hosting communities. All too often needs assessments of displaced persons rely on a small sample size and do not use nationally comparable metrics and indicators of vulnerability or poverty. This constrains the usefulness of the data for targeting and policy purposes. Given the technical support that the World Bank offers to many governments on implementing regular Living Standards Measurement Surveys and other such nationally representative surveys, the Bank is well placed to integrate displaced populations into these instruments either through an adapted methodology or innovative sampling strategies for displaced groups.

**Area-based planning** involves designing development solutions for displacement settlements and camps through assessment and knowledge of the wider spatial and planning context. In Tanzania, for example, there is extremely restricted access to water for the long-term residents of a settlement for former refugees; the shallow wells and boreholes are dried up, contaminated and poorly maintained. Technical advice has been that a more efficient solution lies in linking the water needs of the settlement into the data collection and planning of the relevant government water basin office. This has not been done to date because the settlement is not considered part of local government structures and is administered through separate, parallel arrangements under national refugee law.

Responses for displaced persons are often financed and managed in parallel to the delivery of mainstream development projects. This can result in marginalisation of the displaced from broader development strategies and in some inefficiencies; in DRC, for example, it was found that health centres funded through humanitarian agencies were 47% more expensive than those funded to the same standard by the government. Since World Bank financing is channelled through government systems, it can facilitate the expansion of existing government structures, processes and resources towards displaced populations. It can also serve to strengthen those institutions in the process.

## Opportunities and challenges

As governments and other stakeholders are increasingly looking for alternatives to camps and to the traditional durable solutions of return, resettlement and local integration, and to facilitate the self-reliance of displaced people, new challenges come into play such as socio-economic pressures on host communities, deficits in services and in the labour and housing markets, and the potential for social tensions.

While World Bank tools are highly relevant to identifying and mitigating these issues, the use of World Bank approaches and financing is not without challenges and can only ever be one part of a broader line of action in helping those affected by forced displacement to improve their lives. For a start, there is the political sensitivity for host governments of borrowing and repaying World Bank loans for refugees, that is, non-nationals. Secondly, host governments may compromise a displacement response by restrictions imposed by a government's own policy towards the displaced, requiring careful negotiation. Finally, there are sometimes incentives for governments in keeping humanitarian responses going in order, for example, to maintain the image of the presence of the displaced as temporary or as a source of additional resource injection.

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