Operational

Note No 10

Forced Displacement

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SPaN
Supporting people through crisis

Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

Introduction

'Social protection is [...] imperative for empowering the forcibly displaced and giving them long-term regular and predictable support to address chronic vulnerability.'[1]

One per cent of humankind is living in forced displacement. By the end of 2017, over 68 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, or generalised violence. This is the highest recorded total to date. It includes over 25 million refugees, over 3 million asylum seekers, and 40 million internally displaced people (IDPs).[2, 3] A large part of the crises behind these displacements have become protracted; displacement often becomes prolonged and repeated. More than 80 per cent of refugee crises last for 10 years or more, and the average duration of displacement is now 17 years.[4] The capacity of the humanitarian system to respond to them has reached its limits; response capacity is stretched while the funding gap is widening year on year.[5] Yet the crisis may still be within the range of what the international community can manage with adequate effort and effective collective action.

The EU approach to forced displacement and development [1, 6, 7] **is a development-oriented approach to refugees, IDPs and their hosts with a focus on their specific vulnerabilities and capacities**. It calls for a multi-actor response, including the private sector, based on improved evidence of what works and does not work in different contexts. Building on strong partnerships with hosting countries, it calls for greater synergies between humanitarian and development actors regarding shared analyses, programming and the predictability and flexibility of funding, including at local level, where the most innovative responses emerge. The aim is to foster the resilience and self-reliance of forcibly displaced people through quality education, access to economic opportunities and social protection.[1]

This approach is part of a global move towards more effective responses to forced displacement. Over the past few years, international commitments have created closer links between humanitarian and development programming. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the Grand Bargain commitments[8] coming out of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit recognise refugees and displaced persons as categories of vulnerable people who should not be left behind, and stress the need to strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees. In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants[9] adopted in 2016, all world leaders committed to jointly respond better to refugee situations. This has laid the foundation for the adoption in December 2018 of the Global Compact on Refugees[10] and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,[11] an intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed outcome. In this context, the United Nations system, notably the UNHCR and the IOM, is adapting its approach, while the World Bank is stepping up its engagement.

Social protection has become a cornerstone of any long-term strategy to mitigate the impact of forced displacement on the lives of refugees, internally displaced persons and their hosts. The increasing use of cash transfers as a humanitarian response modality, and robust evidence on the efficiency of social protection, and particularly, social assistance, in both development and crises contexts, led to the recognition of the multiple complementarities and growing convergence between humanitarian assistance and social protection. The motivation for creating closer links between social protection and humanitarian interventions is to better meet the chronic and acute needs of crisis-affected populations (including forcibly displaced populations and their hosts), contribute to reducing humanitarian needs and ultimately, secure a path to peace and sustainable development. Social protection systems, when in place, can be scaled up to deliver fast response and enhanced outreach. They also allow host communities to be assisted equitably in the event of crises, mitigating tensions between IDPs and refugees and local populations.[4]

This note provides an overview of how to foster greater links between social protection and humanitarian assistance in contexts of forced displacement. It illustrates what working with social protection approaches and systems may look like in contexts of forced displacement, and highlights practical tips drawn from past and ongoing experiences. Its primary target audience are European Commission practitioners, specifically staff working in EU delegations and ECHO field offices, as well as ECHO, DEVCO and NEAR operational desks. It also aims to be useful to EU Member States practitioners.

This note notably builds on and complements the following key EU documents:

- The 2016 Communication[1], Staff Working Document[6], and subsequent Council conclusions[7] on the EU approach to forced displacement and development;
- The Operational Guidance Pack on the EU approach to forced displacement and development,[12] prepared jointly by DGs DEVCO, ECHO, NEAR and EEAS and disseminated in July 2018;
- The Reference Document on 'Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: A Game Changer in Supporting People Through Crises'[4] jointly endorsed by DGs DEVCO, ECHO, and NEAR and published in February 2019;
- The Guidance Note on 'Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus in Fragile and Conflict-affected Contexts'[13] published in May 2019.

The note is structured as follows:

1. It underlines critical aspects to keep in mind when addressing the needs of displaced and host populations;
2. It presents different approaches to linking humanitarian assistance to social protection systems in different contexts;
3. It outlines how the EU can engage in joint programming on that matter.

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Addressing the Needs of Displaced and Host Populations

'Equal vulnerability requires equal assistance.'[14]

Fostering Social Cohesion

Political, human rights, humanitarian and development approaches must complement each other to create a 'win-win' scenario for both the displaced and their host communities.[1] Peaceful coexistence in displacement settings is often fragile at best. Most displaced people are hosted in poor countries and communities; competition for employment that tends to be in short supply, or the perception that one group is receiving aid and others are left to fend for themselves, can easily break this delicate balance. Both the forcibly displaced and the host populations need to be actively engaged in the formulation of a localised approach to socioeconomic development, tailor-made to the specific vulnerabilities and capabilities of each region and each group. This would highlight the potential advantages of their co-existence.[1]

Extending the provision of humanitarian assistance and social protection to the host community in addition to the displaced community, and supporting various social cohesion initiatives, help defuse tensions.[15] This may involve, for instance, conducting a joint vulnerability assessment among displaced and host communities, using shared points of delivery, engaging both communities in joint activities, etc.

➲ *In Jordan, the government has a policy that requires equitable provision of support to both refugees and host populations.[16] The one-refugee approach entails supporting not only the Syrian refugees in urban settings, but also the Iraqis, Somalis, Sudanese, Yemenis and other needy refugee minorities. The one-refugee approach and the support to the hosting communities (i.e. vulnerable Jordanians) are de facto lessening the tensions among vulnerable individuals living in the same area/district.[17]*

➲ *In Colombia, different waves of displaced people over several decades have increased the population of the urban suburbs and caused enormous tensions in recipient communities, being themselves the result of previous displacements. The Houses of Rights, administered by the National Procurator of Colombia, are shelters that help everyone in the community to access basic health, education, documentation, and security services, among other things.[18]*

➲ *In Ecuador, a short-term programme implemented over six months by the WFP, including cash, food and food vouchers to Colombian refugees and poor Ecuadorians in urban and peri-urban areas, contributed to the integration of Colombians in their hosting community through increases in personal agency, attitudes accepting diversity, confidence in institutions, and social participation. These positive impacts are believed to have been driven by joint targeting, messaging around social inclusion and through interaction between nationalities at mandated monthly nutrition trainings.[19]*

Building Self-Reliance[1]

One of the most effective ways to reduce the aid dependence of forcibly displaced people and increase their self-reliance is to give them access to livelihoods and labour market opportunities. As well as allowing them financial independence, this helps the displaced integrate into and participate in their host communities.[1] Self-reliance strengthens dignity, enhances positive contributions to the host community, reduces aid dependence and makes solutions more sustainable.[12] Building the self-reliance of the forcibly displaced is crucial in enabling them to become agents of their own development and of the communities hosting them, particularly when displacement is protracted. Measures towards self-reliance offer economic prospects but also hope and scope for aspiration.[20]

Efforts to support economic and financial inclusion, the basic requirement for enabling people to meet their own basic needs in a dignified manner, must start early on.[21] It is of utmost importance to engage in livelihood preservation and creation from the onset of the emergency, and already at the preparedness stage to engage with a wide range of ministries, not least the ministry of agriculture in countries where reliance on subsistence farming is still prominent, to ensure that displaced populations, notably non-nationals, have the right to work and can access (rental) land.[22] Furthermore, because forcibly displaced people tend to settle in poor settings where economic opportunities are limited, efforts need to focus on creating new opportunities, for both displaced and host communities.

Many of the barriers to achieving this are political, notably for non-national populations. When pushed to offer greater economic participation to refugees, host countries tend to respond with two big concerns, relating to development and security. There are no easy answers to the policy challenge of addressing these concerns while empowering refugees. However, a few precedents show that there may be solutions that can simultaneously benefit the host country, enable refugees, and enhance regional security. It lies in a particular approach to job creation, which involves promoting empowerment through the right to work, the role of public-private partnership, the recognition that refugees need to be understood as much in terms of development and trade as humanitarianism, and that deals should be based on the principle of mutual gain. Host states need to recognise refugees as potential contributors to national development, and offer opportunities for them to participate economically. International organisations need to move beyond the humanitarian silo and to prioritise jobs, education, and economic empowerment for refugees early on. International business can also make a real difference to the life chances of refugees (e.g. putting their core skills to use by integrating refugees into global supply chains), and host and donor governments can make a decisive difference by catalysing the process. Attempts to create greater economic empowerment for refugees need to be context-specific, based on a clear understanding of the political and economic constraints and opportunities available within a particular host country. Refugee-hosting-area development approaches can vary on a spectrum of participation, from 'integration' (the Ugandan model) to 'incubation' (the Jordanian model).[20]

⮕ *Uganda has taken a radically different approach from most refugee-hosting countries. It has allowed refugees the right to work and a significant degree of freedom of movement. Uganda's 2006 Refugee Act is regarded as one of the most progressive pieces of refugee legislation in Africa. Living and working alongside host nationals, refugees can make a positive economic contribution to the national economy. They can provide jobs not just for one another but also for host nationals. In Kampala, 21 per cent of refugees run a business that creates jobs, and, of their employees, 40 per cent are citizens of the host country.[23] In Rwamwanja, the rapid economic development of this refugee-hosting area illustrates the fact that simply having the right to work at the outset of an influx can dramatically alter the trajectory of a refugee settlement, enabling specialisation and diversification to take hold, in a way that creates opportunities for both refugees and host nationals.[20]*

⮕ *In Jordan, a middle-income country aspiring to increase its manufacturing base, a deal was achieved between the government and development partners around the establishment of a series of five Special Economic Zones in which refugees are employed alongside nationals. Under this 'Jordan Compact', the country would receive around USD 2 billion in assistance and investment in exchange for the government offering up to 200,000 work permits to Syrian refugees. To make this deal happen, the UK has provided convening power and funding, the World Bank has offered concessional loan-based finance, and, most importantly, the EU has made an unprecedented commitment to provide trade concessions for particular products exported from the Special Economic Zones established. This deal represents a new kind of partnership that involves governments and businesses working together, and that*

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1   *Self-reliance is the ability of people, households or communities to meet their basic needs and to enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable and dignified way.*

cuts across old silos and situates solutions for refugees at the intersection between development, trade, and security. This empowerment model does not depend upon the end of insecurity within Syria; it is working towards an eventual post-conflict reconstruction rather than feeding into a narrative of 'local integration'.[20]

➲ *There are other precedents for Special Economic Zones for refugees. Zones were set up in **Thailand** for Burmese refugees and cross-border workers. What was originally the Bataan Refugee Processing Center in the **Philippines** was repurposed into a Special Economic Zone.[20]*

'Alternatives to Camps' settlement strategies are to be advocated for whenever possible.[1, 12] Restrictive camp settings limit the possibilities for boosting self-reliance. Alternatives to encampment can be facilitated by early development commitments to support such approaches. The fact that more forcibly displaced people now live in urban areas than camps gives them more opportunities to integrate.

➲ *In response to the 2016 earthquake in **Ecuador**, the government not only delivered cash transfers to the affected population but also to the host families and tenants. Such assistance was intended not only to help host families but also to encourage the displaced population to leave the temporary camps. Host families were entitled to USD 135 per month for six months for utilities. Tenants were entitled to USD 135 per month for six months. To access these schemes, affected families and recipients had to sign an agreement, which was subject to verification by the authorities.[24]*

In the case of non-nationals, a primary focus should be granting refugees access to decent work and financial services for them to restore their livelihoods. The right to work for refugees is protected in the 1951 Refugee Convention[25] and also prescribed in international and regional human rights instruments.[26-28] The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants[9] and its Global Compact on Refugees[10] including the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework[29] call for the enhancement of refugee resilience and self-reliance, as well as the need for and benefit of taking on a whole-of-society approach. The approach of livelihoods and economic inclusion programmes for refugees is threefold:[21]

- Engage in advocacy to enhance the enabling environment such that refugees have legal and de facto access to decent work (such as through rights to work, own a business, access financial services and own land/property, and through freedom of mobility);
- Partner with and convene expert entities to facilitate inclusion of refugees into existing programmes/services, ensuring decent work;[27, 30]
- As a last resort, implement interventions directly or through partners to fill a gap in service – in cases of implementation, operations are recommended to apply the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards.[31]

A combination of diplomacy and advocacy efforts, development support and humanitarian assistance is required. Implementation and advocacy are thus not mutually exclusive. A commitment to continue implementing while advocating for the involvement of relevant expertise is vital to respond to immediate needs (such as those relating to food security) and to promote the long-term economic inclusion of refugees.[22]

➲ *In **Lebanon**, the EU funded the Labour Force and Living Standards Survey, which has included Syrian refugees. The survey informed policymaking and the labour market information systems that are key for human development planning. As a follow-up to the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy, the Commission promotes initiatives on the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations in skills development and job creation programmes in the marine and maritime sectors.[1]*

➲ *While it struggles with economic development for its own nationals, **Jordan** is now home to 650,000 Syrian refugees. In 2016, the EU-Jordan Compact was agreed to turn this refugee crisis into a development opportunity for Jordan. It shifts short-term humanitarian aid to growth, investment and job creation, both for Jordanians and Syrian refugees. It combines humanitarian and development funding, multi-year grants and concessional loans. To encourage businesses that export goods to Europe to employ refugees, the EU has relaxed its rules of origin to stimulate exports of goods from 18 designated areas where Syrian refugees are employed. The Compact has led to considerable improvements in labour market access for Syrian refugees who received, from February 2016 to October 2017, 71,000 work permits. It has also help reforms the business investment environment and formalise Syrian businesses, and has provided vocational training opportunities to Syrian refugees.[32]*

Adjustments in the modality of humanitarian/social assistance can contribute to building self-reliance. Notably, cash-based initiatives create livelihoods opportunities. Cash and vouchers are examples of some of the new approaches devised for providing support that can increase self-reliance and instil a sense of dignity and ownership among displaced people.[1, 33] The flexibility offered by cash-based initiatives provides a more dignified form of assistance, giving beneficiaries the ability to prioritise and choose what they need, and boost the local economy through purchases. Whenever possible, shifting from in-kind distribution of products and services to the provision of cash-based interventions instead can help create a more enabling environment for the economic inclusion of the displaced populations.[21] When considering the design of humanitarian/social assistance, one should always ask the questions: 'why not cash?' and 'if not now, when?'[34]

⮫ *In **Jordan**, the transition from supporting refugees with non-food items for different sectors (WASH, winterisation, shelter upgrade kits, etc.) as well as cash for rent (to landlords) to monthly unconditional multipurpose cash assistance for the most vulnerable refugees proved particularly effective.[17]*

⮫ *Through cash transfers provided under the Emergency Social Safety Net in **Turkey**, refugees were able to prioritise expenditure to overcome barriers (e.g. public transportation) to seek opportunities in urban settings.[17]*

⮫ *In **Lebanon**, over 80 per cent of Syrian refugees have settled in urban and peri-urban areas. A big challenge faced is securing adequate accommodation for families. In 2013, the Norwegian Refugee Council supported property owners to bring unfinished houses and apartments to a basic habitable condition in exchange for hosting Syrian families rent-free for 12 months. This in turn helped stimulate local economic activity and increased the value of property assets – a win-win approach.[17]*

Social protection and livelihoods interventions can also be explicitly combined, as exemplified in public works programmes or 'Cash Plus' measures, which combine cash transfers with one or more types of complementary support.[35] In many displacement contexts, the agriculture sector remains an engine of stabilisation and recovery; agriculture cannot be an afterthought when addressing the immediate and longer-term needs of the forcibly displaced and of the community hosting them.[36] There is potential for a 'Social Protection Plus' approach, contributing to: preventing the economic and food-insecurity-related causes of displacement; ensuring the portability of benefits; strengthening the economic capacity of host communities, particularly as social services, labour and productive opportunities may be strained; and providing access to social and economic opportunities for refugees and internally displaced populations, particularly in protracted crises (including camp settings).[37]

⮫ *In the East of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the World Bank has been supporting labour-intensive public work (LIPW) programmes for returning IDPs and those without land. The rehabilitation of rural roads through LIPW facilitates the evacuation of agricultural produce while putting cash into the hands of local people – labour cost content is higher than 45 per cent of total cost. LIPWs also include, for instance, reforestation and other soil and water conservation works (natural disaster prevention measures), and garbage collection and street cleaning in urban centres. In rural areas, LIPWs are implemented during the agricultural off-season to avoid interfering with agricultural employment/livelihoods. In view of the temporary nature of LIPW employment, LIPWs are supplemented by activities aimed at increasing participants' employability at the end of their employment: a voluntary savings programme to help participants put aside part of their wages as start-up capital for initiating post-LIPWs activities; training in life skills (e.g. conflict prevention, hygiene, HIV prevention, gender relations); and training in basic business (e.g. understanding the economic environment, setting up an income-generating activity, preparing a business plan for a micro-enterprise, basic accounting principles) and technical skills in areas where the local job market offers employment opportunities (agriculture and other non-agricultural rural activities determined on the basis of local market analysis). If requested by participants, training activities may also include functional literacy.[38]*

➲ *For over five decades, **Uganda** has been generously hosting refugees and asylum seekers. Refugees in Uganda have some of the best prospects for self-reliance. The challenge, however, is to convert this potential into reality. The UNHCR, the WFP and their partners have been working together to help refugees take advantage of these opportunities and ensure that host communities benefit too. In 2014, they jointly launched a new programme to enable refugee farmers to engage more actively and profitably in the thriving agricultural economy found outside the refugee settlements. Having received land for cultivation from the host government, refugees are now being given training in post-harvest handling and storage equipment. Farmers from the host community are also being provided with the same assistance. Through this more inclusive approach, tension is reduced between the two communities and benefits are shared equally. At the same time, the UNHCR is working with the government, the World Bank and other partners to strengthen the self-reliance and resilience of both refugees and host communities through another project, the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment initiative (ReHoPE), a self-reliance and resilience strategic framework for refugee and host communities, which aims to facilitate the gradual transition from humanitarian to development programming in refugee-impacted districts. This goal will be achieved through joint analysis, collective advocacy, integrated service delivery, and joint resource mobilisation.* [22]

Ensuring Access to Essential Goods and Services

Identity documentation constitutes an essential element of protection for individuals. Registering a child's birth is a critical first step towards safeguarding lifelong protection. Ensuring birth registration is particularly important for the prevention of statelessness.[39] Documentation is also essential to access labour and financial services.

➲ *In **Nigeria**, which has ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, the national legal framework is conducive to the inclusion of refugees in national systems and there is a political will to include them in national social protection programmes. Refugees have access to national education and health services and the right to access farmland. However, due to limitations in the documents they have available, most refugees can access financial services only partially. Equally, not all foreign degrees or other administrative documents are recognised.* [21]

➲ *The **Islamic Republic of Iran** hosts some 30,000 registered Iraqi refugees and an estimated 3.5 million (first, second or third generation) Afghans (registered refugees, passport holders and undocumented). In recent years the government has introduced policies conducive to inclusion and sustainable access to national services for Afghan and Iraqi refugees living in Iran. These include registration and status determination, as well as the issuance of refugee identity, or 'Amayesh' cards, which enable refugees to access basic services and work permits, and protect them against detention and deportation. Also, since 2015, all eligible children attend public schools regardless of documentation status.*

➲ *In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the UNHCR, UNICEF and the National Commission for Refugees sponsored mobile courts that supported late birth registration and the delivery of birth certificates to 743 returnees and 181 urban refugees. As a result, about 99 per cent of children identified as at risk of statelessness received a birth certificate, representing a significant improvement from 2016, when 54 per cent of children at risk of statelessness received birth certificates.* [39]

Attending to the legal framework for social protection is crucial, not least to support the protection of unaccompanied and separated children.

➲ *In **East Africa**, the UNHCR has worked together with UNICEF and the East African Community to strengthen the inclusion of refugee children in national systems and services. In April 2018, the UNHCR supported a Regional Roundtable that brought together approximately 45 technical experts from child protection, social welfare, and refugee departments from the six East African Community Partner States (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda) and Ethiopia. The aim of the roundtable was to share learning, practices and experiences in facilitating the inclusion of refugee children into national child protection systems. The meeting resulted in a Statement of Good Practice on Inclusion of Refugee Children in national systems which was signed and endorsed by the East African Community.* [40]

➲ *In the **European Union**, the UNHCR has worked with governments and civil society on a 'Roadmap to Strengthened Policies and Practices for Unaccompanied and Separated Children', following extensive consultations with staff and with young people themselves in 2016.[41]*

➲ *The UNHCR has been working with governments to strengthen community-based care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children, including as an alternative to detention. In **Jordan**, the UNHCR worked with the Ministry of Social Development to formalise guidelines and procedures for alternative care of unaccompanied children. In **Mexico**, the government has undertaken work to strengthen 'Best Interests Procedures for Unaccompanied and Separated Children' as part of the implementation of the Child Rights Law and Regulations, which create a national child protection system with a new Federal Office for the Protection of Children's Rights.[42]*

Social protection measures can address the demand-side barriers to essential social services, such as education and health. Ensuring access to education and health for displaced populations is crucial as it creates opportunities for livelihoods and economic inclusion towards self-reliance. For instance, increased income through social protection schemes enables households to cover out-of-pocket education expenses such as transport, school uniforms or books.

➲ *In **Turkey**, the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education programme provides education to refugee children. Implemented by UNICEF and the Turkish Red Crescent, it is the EU's largest programme on education in emergencies. The programme uses the same ATM card as the EU Emergency Social Safety Net. It provides cash transfers to vulnerable refugee families whose children attend school regularly. It helped get 290,000 refugee children back into school.[32]*

➲ *In **Lebanon**, the No Lost Generation (Min Ila) programme was designed to cover the cost of commuting to school and to compensate households for income forgone if children attend school instead of working, two critical barriers to school participation among displaced Syrian children.[43] Implemented jointly by UNICEF, the WFP, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and Caritas Lebanon, it provides unconditional, regular and unrestricted cash transfers for around 50,000 children enrolled in the afternoon shift of a public primary school. This is coupled with follow-up and referral to complementary services for non-attending children to address non-income related barriers. A robust impact evaluation revealed substantive impacts on school attendance among enrolled children, as well as improvements in food security, reduction of child labour, and optimism.[44]*

Supporting social welfare services, including a network of qualified social workers, is vital to support case management and specific services, such as child protection, mental health care services and psychological support – particularly important yet often neglected aspects in forced displacement contexts.

➲ *In **Colombia**, a rapid influx of Colombian returnees and Venezuelan refugees in 2015 triggered the National System for Management of Risks and Disasters to respond. Assistance was provided across the four pillars of the national social protection system: health, education, housing and vulnerability. Mobile units of interdisciplinary teams, including social workers, were deployed to identify beneficiaries and their needs, refer them to appropriate services and monitor the support provided. 'Social inclusion and reconciliation' plans included the documentation of beneficiary needs, the creation of opportunities for productive inclusion, support from social workers in housing and financial assistance, and child and adolescent protection activities. Several existing programmes and services to provide psychosocial assistance, legal advice, nutritional guidance, public works and technical training for skills development were scaled up. Key factors that enabled this rapid and effective response were the availability of a network of qualified professional social workers and the existence of a range of social protection programmes with broad coverage and robust delivery systems.[4, 45]*

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Aligning with the National System towards Transition and Integration

'Humanitarian practitioners should be required to demonstrate why they are not working with existing social protection systems, programmes or approaches, to prepare for and support crisis responses – not just on the onset of a disaster (ex post) but also in preparedness (ex ante), notably in contexts of cyclical crises, disaster and displacement events.'[4]

Aligning in Different Contexts

The role of host governments is crucial and needs to be supported as they are responsible for the legal and policy frameworks through which the needs of refugees, IDPs and host communities can be addressed.[1] Objective 22 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is to 'establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits.' Signatories 'commit to assist migrant workers at all skills levels to have access to social protection in countries of destination and profit from the portability of applicable social security entitlements and earned benefits in their countries of origin or when they decide to take up work in another country' and to 'facilitate the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants into community life by providing them equal access to social protection and services, justice, psycho-social assistance, vocational training, employment opportunities and decent work, recognition of skills acquired abroad, and financial services, in order to fully build upon their entrepreneurship, skills and human capital as active members of society and contributors to sustainable development in the country of origin upon return.'[11] The New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants calls to improve the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance to those countries most affected and, where appropriate, develop national strategies for the protection of refugees within the framework of national social protection systems, as appropriate.[9]

The EU should further expand its efforts to help host governments develop integrated approaches to providing services and developing social protection programmes for both the displaced and hosts. [1] In countries where there are well-developed social protection schemes for citizens, the inclusion of migrants, refugees and other forcibly displaced people in these systems is generally preferable to the development of parallel programmes delivered by international or national humanitarian and/or development organisations.[15] Humanitarian practitioners should always be required to demonstrate why they are not working with existing social protection systems, programmes or approaches, to prepare for and support crisis responses, not just when a mass influx of forcibly displaced people takes place but also in preparedness.[4] An integration of services benefits both displaced and host communities and is more cost efficient.[12] In contexts where states are fragile or fragmented, sub-national and informal governance mechanisms are particularly important in responding to forced displacement.[13]

Humanitarian assistance should be time-bound and communicated as providing only a transitional support while displaced populations wait to access some or all of the various social protection benefits available at the national level. Due to the lack of sustainable peace in many countries of origin, restrictive host country policies and limited resettlement places, most displaced people live in protracted displacement for more than five years. Few have found durable solutions, such as voluntary repatriation, resettlement or local integration.[1] The more protracted the displacement, the more humanitarian objectives align with social protection objectives. The
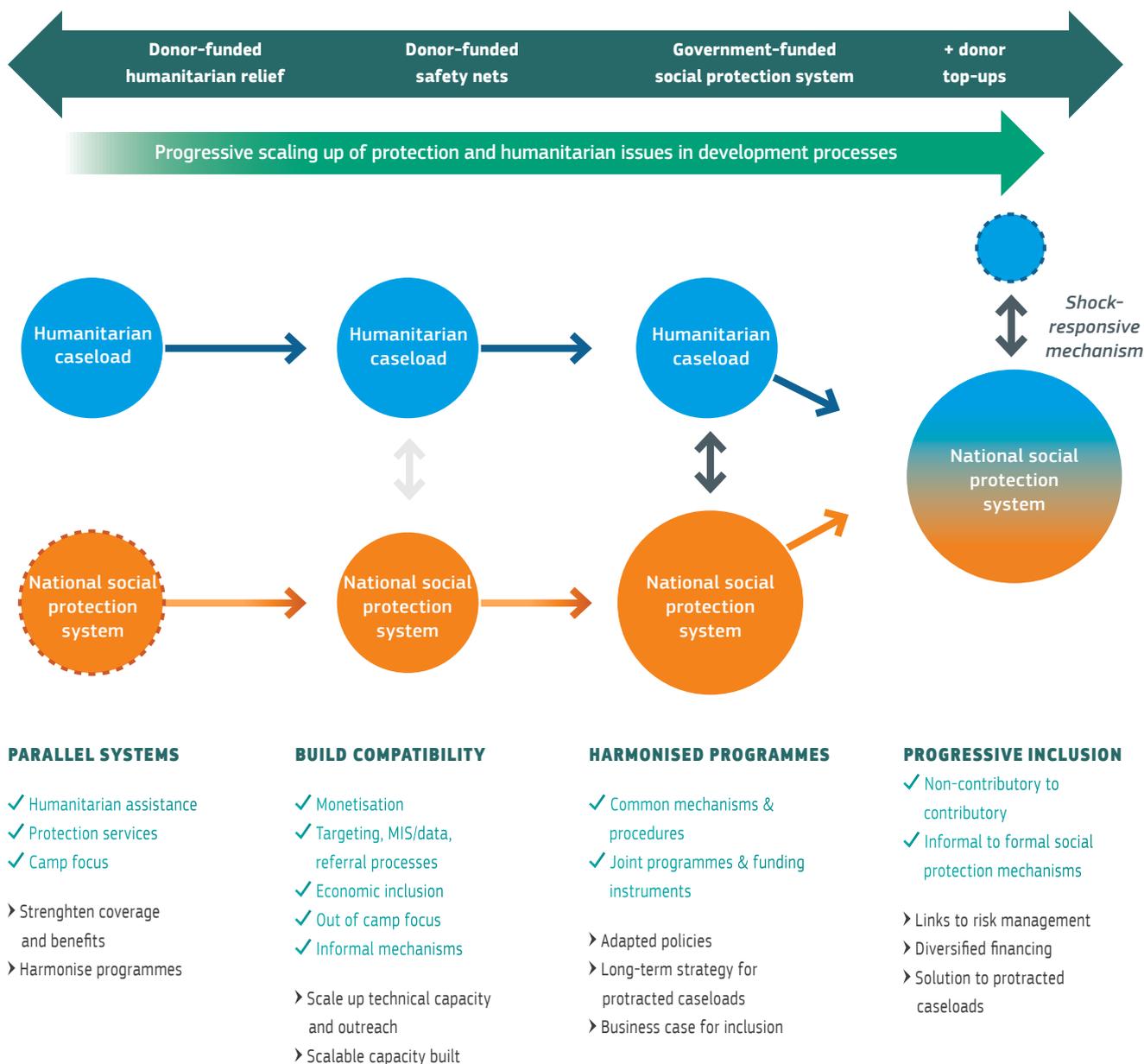
types of support needed by the host population and displaced people converge, notably to meet the potential longer-term dimensions of forcibly displaced people's needs, such as housing, healthcare, nutrition, protection, drinking water and sanitation, and education. Because displacement tends to be protracted, the level of assistance needed is not sustainable by humanitarian actors. After the immediate emergency state, before the situation becomes protracted, humanitarian organisations can and should prepare for more sustainable solutions, which include the incorporation of displaced populations in the national systems. Working with the national system can contribute to greater effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. It can also reduce response times, avoid duplications, support local economies and offer a progressive exit strategy – that is, a smooth exit, before a reduction in funding requires drastic and immediate changes to the assistance provided.

➲ *In **Turkey**, the EU Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) provides assistance to over one million Syrian refugees. It was designed in conjunction with the Government of Turkey and is implemented through a partnership between WFP, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Ministry of Family and Social Policy and Halkbank. It was specifically aligned with (and aims to support) recent policy reforms of the Turkish Government that aim to increase refugees' access to services and have opened up opportunities for more integration. While the ESSN has remained conceptually, administratively and financially distinct from the national social welfare system, it capitalises on national institutions. The national Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations are responsible for accepting and screening applications from refugees under temporary and international protection for ESSN assistance. The fact that the ESSN has been aligned to the Turkish national system makes its transition easier.[32, 46]*

➲ *In **Greece**, the UNHCR set up a completely separate system for the provision of assistance to asylum seekers. Now that funding for humanitarian interventions by external actors is dwindling, the transition to state-led assistance is not straightforward. Instead, a completely new structure, ideally leveraging on the mechanisms used for the national Social Solidarity Income scheme and other social payments such as pensions and disability support, will need to be built. Not only is this process both time-consuming and costly, but it may or may not be possible for the authorities to maintain the current level of assistance, which makes the approach unsustainable.[47]*

Moving towards transition and inclusion requires long-term, coordinated efforts to be initiated early on. The decision to align with the national systems, away from parallel systems, should not come as an afterthought or be considered only once humanitarian financing starts to dwindle, despite there being no imminent prospects of return. Instead, it should be part of an overall response strategy, starting from preparedness. Figure 1 illustrates what such a progressive alignment process may look like, in the case of humanitarian cash transfers, progressively transitioning from humanitarian action to development support towards the full inclusion of displaced people in the national system. Political economy issues have so far prevented such integration in many contexts. Host governments' lack of willingness to absorb refugees into the national system, due to development and security concerns as well as political and long-term funding issues, lies at the heart of the problem. While there is no easy answer to this challenge, a few precedents show that a mutually beneficial deal may be found between a host government, development partners and the private sector to support economic development of refugee-hosting areas benefiting both displaced and host populations, as illustrated in the section 'Building Self-Reliance', above.

Figure 1: *Progressive Alignment of Humanitarian Cash Assistance with National Systems*

An integrated approach combining alignment, gradual or immediate, and reinforcement of the national system is relevant in all contexts, irrespective of the degree to which host governments are currently able to provide social support. Even when delivering assistance to displaced persons through the state-led system is not possible or desirable (for instance, because the system is ill-equipped, corrupted or biased), there may be elements of the overall system to align with and reinforce, not least a range of pre-existing non-government social/humanitarian assistance programmes targeted at vulnerable people. There are broadly three common ways of working with social protection in contexts of forced displacement, each heavily influenced by the maturity of the existing social protection system. These are not mutually exclusive and in many contexts a combination may be appropriate: align, inform, transition; utilise and preserve; develop and strengthen.[13] Weak governments in fragile settings might require more direct action by humanitarian and development actors, while stronger governments might require more support in enhancing the national system's capacity to respond. While building national social protection systems traditionally builds upon long-term commitments, the humanitarian community can play an important role in aligning with and complementing these efforts, where consistent with its principles.

➲ *By early 2014, at the height of the influx of refugees into* **Lebanon**, *and with the WFP e-card food voucher programme in full swing throughout the country for Syrian refugees, there was increasing evidence of growing tensions among poor Lebanese families and refugees residing within the same communities. In response, the World Bank and the WFP worked with the government to introduce food assistance via the e-card food vouchers to poor Lebanese families enrolled in the National Poverty Targeting Programme, providing a level of assistance parity received by refugees.[49] This scale-up was operated not only as a means of reducing poverty and tension between the two communities, but also to strengthen the national system. It included the financing of operational support, training and capacity-development assistance for the Ministry of Social Affairs to assume the overall responsibility for the implementation of key aspects of the food voucher programme.[50]*

➲ *In* **Iraq**, *the EU is supporting a sequenced, multi-purpose cash assistance programme to help displaced people and vulnerable households in host communities. The objectives are to align government-led and humanitarian cash programming more closely, avoid creating parallel systems and establish close cooperation between humanitarian assistance and long-term support. The cash programme was launched at local/governorate level to build local linkages which can then be raised to the national level in conjunction with ongoing support for, and reform of, national social protection policies and schemes.[1]*

The nature of alignment options and appropriate approaches will vary depending on the context. It will be influenced by at least three key factors:[13, 51] the displacement context (see Annex 1); the maturity and coverage of the national social protection system, including the legal framework (for instance, defining access to work for non-nationals); and the stage of the crisis.[13]

➲ *In* **Greece**, *both asylum-seekers and refugees have the right to work. But while refugees are eligible for the Social Solidarity Income made available to Greek nationals and other legal aliens, asylum-seekers are not. With ECHO funding, the UNHCR has been providing accommodation and monthly cash transfers to asylum-seekers and those who have expressed their interest in applying for asylum. Only asylum-seekers who have arrived in Greece after 1 January 2015 are currently entitled to receive accommodation and cash assistance. This cut-off date was jointly agreed upon by ECHO and the UNHCR in order to keep the beneficiary numbers in line with available resources.[47]*

➲ *In* **Sweden**, *which is perceived as having a relatively generous support programme, asylum-seekers who are able to provide for themselves must pay for their own accommodation. Those who are unable to manage without external support are entitled to housing, food and/or cash allowances. The maximum amount made available to asylum-seekers is lower than what an adult person with Swedish nationality or a recognised refugee on welfare may receive. The values are also different for adults and minors, with children, unaccompanied or not, receiving a lower amount.[52]*

➲ *In* **Mexico**, *non-nationals are not, at the moment, generally included in national social assistance schemes. Refugees have access to economic and social rights, including formal employment, health and education, but they have issues in accessing these rights due to discrimination and insufficient capacity for authorities to process documents. There is a temporary inclusion of asylum-seekers in the system to grant them with rights but the documents they have are not known or recognised. This is made worse by the increasing number of arrivals, which is stretching the national systems (e.g. health and education) beyond their limits.[47]*

➲ *In* **Chad**, *the EU-funded Inclusive Development Programme in Hosting Areas (Programme de Développement Inclusif dans les Zones d'Accueil, DIZA), a EUR 15 million programme developed jointly by the EU Delegation in Chad and ECHO, was launched in 2018. It is implemented by two NGO consortia in refugee-hosting areas in the South and East of Chad. The overall objective for this three-year programme is to improve the living conditions of local populations, refugees and returnees in hosting areas through support for inclusive local development. DIZA subscribes to the following principles of engagement in order to ensure alignment on areas of intervention and their modalities: targeting beneficiaries based on the same harmonised questionnaire; including beneficiaries in the same national database (Unified Social Registry); using the government's norms and standards in rehabilitating and building basic service infrastructure as well as the provision of services; supporting a phased transition from humanitarian interventions to development programmes that benefit refugees and host communities; and aiming to harmonise the level of cash transfer benefits to poor households.[53]*

Aligning with Different Policy Instruments

Cash transfers and vouchers have become the preferred and default humanitarian response modality,[33, 54] away from in-kind assistance, which has demonstrated limits, and in line with international commitments, such as the Grand Bargain. Cash transfers and vouchers can be used in a variety of settings, as long as there is a stable and functioning market and a safe way to deliver them. The flexibility that this modality offers provides a more dignified form of assistance, giving displaced and host communities the ability to prioritise and choose what they need and boost the local economy through purchases. Livelihoods activities that can be supported through multi-purpose cash transfers[55] (unrestricted cash transfers, which can be conditional or unconditional) might include different types of investments in business and employment, such as business grants, cash for training, etc.[21] One should always ask the questions: 'why not cash?' and 'if not now, when?'[34] In 2017, cash transfers and vouchers made up over 38 per cent of the European Commission's humanitarian aid, for a total of more than EUR 990 million.[54]

⮕ *The consequences of the conflict in **Syria**, which has displaced millions of people inside Syria and across borders to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and elsewhere, were met with an unprecedented humanitarian response. Unconditional cash transfers became the EU primary response mechanism to support basic needs of refugees and IDPs.[32]*

The increased use of cash assistance as part of both humanitarian and development assistance has opened up new opportunities for linking temporary, even if increasingly long-term, humanitarian assistance with national social support services, notably in protracted crises. Annex 2 presents a framework for assessing the readiness of a given social protection scheme to deliver humanitarian cash transfers. It is always worth considering whether or not any alignment is appropriate from the outset (for instance, using the same payment mechanism, even if the value of the transfer is different) for it is much harder to align retroactively. A critical aspect when aligning humanitarian cash transfers for displaced populations with the national system is setting the transfer value and adjusting it over time, towards transition and integration, as outlined in Box 1.

⮕ *In **Mexico**, the humanitarian minimum expenditure basket (MEB) has been estimated higher than the maximum value provided by the national scheme Prospera for the same purpose. However, it is in the interest of the UNHCR to align, immediately or in the medium-term, with the values in the national system, as the Prospera and other national support together with self-reliance are the only feasible exit strategy for humanitarian actors, including the UNHCR. Given the high income discrepancies in the country, providing refugees and asylum seekers with grants higher than those made available to nationals is likely to increase xenophobia and cause unnecessary conflicts between communities.[47]*

⮕ *In **Nigeria**, the UNHCR together with partners will provide a 14-month emergency response focused on the delivery of unconditional cash assistance to meet immediate food needs, while simultaneously enhancing access to and profitability of livelihoods. The initial support will be equal to USD 100 per family per month or USD 20 per person, which is five times the assistance provided through the national safety nets. These amounts will be gradually, within a 14-month period, reduced to the standard amounts.[47]*

Box 1: Setting the transfer values of unconditional, multipurpose cash grants[47]

Basic needs – Minimum expenditure baskets,[56] used to calculate the transfer values for unconditional, multipurpose cash grants,[55] are regularly higher than the countries' minimum wage and therefore, if provided in full by one agency or jointly by a number of agencies, higher than what an educated government official might make and notably more than what a teacher earns.

Initial transfer value – On the other hand, many displaced people have left a situation of poverty and food insecurity. As a result, they do not, in general, have the means to compensate for the loss of income; their situation upon arrival is especially dire. Hence, it may in the first instance be justifiable to provide an amount higher than that available to host population members.

Access to labour market – Furthermore, if refugees are not allowed to work it does not necessarily make sense for them to be granted the same level of support as is provided in social protection to the national population because they have different needs (e.g. they may have lost their land, homes, etc.).

Gradual alignment – In contexts where national assistance is lower than that provided by humanitarian agencies, a gradual approach, with clear communication systems, is necessary to avoid abrupt changes and to allow beneficiaries to adjust their household economies so that they can weather the change, either in terms of the value of the grant or exclusion due to more restricted targeting.

Communication – Crucial to the success of this approach is communication to ensure that both refugees and host communities understand when, where and for how long assistance will be provided. Two-way communication is key to ensuring greater understanding of programme design, assistance levels and timeframes, while also addressing risks and allowing for programme adjustment. Those considered eligible for humanitarian cash transfer, whether blanket or targeted, should receive prior information about the upcoming transition, and in the intervening period, the transfer value should be slowly adjusted downwards until it is in line with the national value.[47]

Beyond in-kind and/or cash transfers, complementary measures are essential to foster self-reliance- as underlined in 'Building Self-Reliance', above. Humanitarian assistance is often insufficient to cover basic needs in full, but will enable families to manage, once they have access to some earning opportunities. Providing cash with other support can lead to stronger impacts compared to cash alone.[35] Such linkages might be in the form of referrals to existing services or social and behaviour-change communications on issues such as nutrition or sanitation. This presents additional opportunities for connecting displaced people with national services (such as livelihood training, social care services, psychological support) towards their integration.

➲ *In **Cameroon**, the UNHCR will be implementing a transitional safety net for Central African Republic refugees over the period 2018-2020, which reflects an integrated strategy that aims to: provide basic needs assistance through predictable monthly cash transfers over 24 months; support refugees' own pathways to self-reliance and graduation from assistance by means of livelihoods training and cash grants for income generation; provide immediate cash support to refugee new arrivals; provide additional support for highly vulnerable protection cases; and link refugees into national social protection systems.*

Many different social protection instruments may be considered when aligning humanitarian assistance in contexts of forced displacement, such as active labour market policies, health insurance, or social welfare services - as illustrated in 'Ensuring Access to Essential Goods and Services', above. Social protection encompasses a whole range of activities and services, many of which are similar to, if not the same as, those used in humanitarian programming.[4] Alignment of humanitarian cash assistance with these social assistance instruments will only be fully effective if active labour market policies include the forcibly displaced and they have, or will eventually have, access to basic services, including but not limited to health and education. Ultimately, the long-term vision should be progressive alignment and integration towards a comprehensive social protection package. Making this whole transition approach work, harnessing the whole of the national social protection system (not just cash transfers / social safety nets), entails collectively covering the risk landscape affecting families, comprising large-scale (covariate) shocks and household-level/life-cycle (idiosyncratic) shocks.

➲ *In **Iran**, an EU project gives access for registered Afghan refugees to primary health care. Implemented by the UNHCR, the project integrates the delivery of medical care via the national health system. It allows Afghan refugees to access the existing Iranian preventive primary health care. Beyond direct treatment, it also allows Afghan refugees to use the national Universal Public Health Insurance. Refugees are responsible for paying part of their health insurance premiums subsidised by the government. By doing so, refugees use the same system used by the Iranians themselves instead of creating a parallel system, thereby making the response more durable and cost-efficient.[32]*

Aligning Through Different Elements of the System

Combining humanitarian and social protection expertise and know-how may contribute to reinforcing key elements of the national system, towards the progressive development of an integrated shock-responsive social protection system.[57] Often, no single national programme will be ready to expand, as is, to deliver humanitarian assistance to displaced populations. Rather, different aspects of a relevant programme may (progressively) be integrated into the humanitarian response mechanism, towards full transition and integration in contexts of protracted displacement. For instance, it may be possible for the humanitarian response to adopt the same application process as the national programme but rely on a distinct payment mechanism, at least in the first stage.[58]

Adopting a long-term, system approach to social protection is relevant in all contexts of forced displacement, notably in protracted crises.[59] There may be circumstances where it is more appropriate or realistic for social protection to be delivered and financed by non-state actors, at least in the first stage (for instance, in the case of rural and isolated refugee camps with no nearby local population, or a weak or hostile host state). This can introduce challenges related to financial sustainability and the duration of provision, undermining any entitlement/rights intention of the provision, as well as raising questions about accountability. Such issues underline the importance of efforts to move from fragmented short-term humanitarian funding to more predictable long-term models which have some of the characteristics of a state-led system (such as common targeting, registration and financing), although led by international actors.[15] This may provide useful operational elements in the future development of the national social protection system.

An assessment of the national system's readiness to respond to a situation of forced displacement, or any other crisis, should not only assess individual social protection schemes but also consider any other relevant elements of the system, as suggested in Annex 2 – for instance, disaster response institutions, civil registry, or agricultural extension services.

Conducting joint vulnerability assessments, or targeting beneficiaries based on the same harmonised questionnaire may be useful initial steps towards progressive alignment, transition and integration. In contexts where nationals have to apply for social assistance, adopting similar application processes for asylum-seekers/refugees supported by humanitarian actors can facilitate integration and encourage language learning and other similar activities that support medium- and long-term self-reliance.[47]

➲ In **Lebanon**, the EUTF aims to carry out a joint vulnerability assessment including the Lebanese population, based on the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR), an annual survey of refugees conducted jointly by UNICEF, the UNHCR and the WFP, the methodology of which can be extended to be more comprehensive and inclusive. Participation of Lebanese experts and resources (government, academic) in such an exercise provides an opportunity to develop a common understanding of vulnerability analysis and to build the capacity of Lebanese officials.[14, 60]

➲ To provide targeted support to poor and vulnerable Chadians, the Government of **Chad** has taken steps to develop a safety net system that is also suitable for the inclusion of refugees. A harmonised questionnaire was introduced by government decree as a first step towards building a Unified Social Registry, which aims to combine information from selected social programmes funded by the government and external partners into a single database. A flexible approach to identification, targeting and registration of poor and vulnerable households is used in order to have in place a highly adaptable system that can be scaled up to respond to urgent situations, such as a sudden inflow of refugees that impacts host communities. As part of the combined efforts to assist the government in building a shock-responsive social protection system, many WFP, ECHO and UNHCR partners are using the harmonised questionnaire during the lean season. In refugee camps, this approach will be supported by the extensive work that WFP and UNHCR have jointly conducted to survey more than 83,000 households using a questionnaire based on the harmonised questionnaire.[53]

➲ In **EU Member States**, monetary or material support to asylum-seekers is not automatic; each asylum-seeker is expected to apply for it; eligibility is assessed on a case-by-case basis. Application is usually done online but can also be completed manually. As is the case for any citizen or a recognised refugee, asylum-seekers are able to access information, support and guidance to manage these application processes. The level of support to asylum seekers in cash or as vouchers tends to be dependent on whether the applicant lives in catered or non-catered accommodation but also on his/her ability to support him/herself. Payments are usually made through pre-paid ATM cards as asylum-seekers are rarely able to open accounts.[47]

➲ In **Finland**, as in most other EU countries, eligibility is dependent upon one's own income (salary, income from rented property, pensions from another country, etc.) and assets as well as the income and assets of one's spouse. People with income or assets may be excluded from assistance altogether or receive a reduced amount.[61]

➲ For the Social Solidarity Income scheme in **Greece**, potential beneficiaries apply for the assistance online and provide information (on their household, their income, housing, etc.), based on which a decision is taken on whether they are eligible for assistance or not. The amount of the transfer is complementary to fill the gap between household income and the poverty line.[47]

Interagency cooperation should be enhanced when designing social registries to support governments. Strict data protection rules may impede collaboration and data sharing. However, from a technological perspective, there are solutions such as cloud-based sharing with various firewalls. Full information sharing is not always necessary. It is possible, for instance, to establish a joint payment delivery platform among UN agencies. But any transition and handover to government will be much more complex if the tools that are used cannot be transferred to government. It runs the risk of having to start over once the government wants to take control of the registry system. Again, it is important to adopt a long-term perspective early on; the endgame is to have a unit in government to host and manage this information ethically and securely.

➲ In **Lebanon**, beneficiary households of the Min Ila programme receive their payments through the LOUISE (Lebanon One Unified Inter-agency System for E-Cards) System which uses a single ATM Card (the 'Red Card') for all cash payments to households. The programme also has a complaints mechanism that is accessible via a hotline.

➲ In **Somalia**, given that there were few platforms relevant for registry purposes, working with various humanitarian actors that are already collecting data for beneficiary management systems has created opportunities for harmonisation and cost efficiencies. The number of donors that need to agree, representing funding, is not large, and the actors that represent all the beneficiaries are also few in number. Thus, there are big opportunities and even now there are coalitions of NGOs using the same databases. There are about five big databases in Somalia — and people are moving away from Excel files.

⮞ *The Government of **Chad** established the Cellule Filets Sociaux (CFS) in 2016 to manage its safety net programmes, particularly cash transfers and cash-for-work schemes. In December 2018, the government, through the CFS, was moving towards finalising the Unified Social Registry (USR) manual and procuring all necessary hardware (servers, mainframes) and software to establish the registry. It is envisaged that a USR unit will eventually be created within the government. These efforts are supported by the World Bank notably through budget support (via a Multi-Donor Trust Fund).[53]*

If harmonised questionnaires and unified social registries/databases represent promising practices to operationalise the humanitarian-development nexus, they also raise important questions related to data privacy and security. Opportunities for linking humanitarian actors' databases with the national social protection information system,[62] or delivering entitlements digitally, also entail risks, including competition for a 'dominant' registry system, security of a mega database, or data privacy and security in data sharing. In general, the use of third-party registration and identification systems, such as WFP's SCOPE,[63] is not recommended in traditional development programming or government-led programmes. This includes, for instance, the use of existing third-party systems to support or interface with social protection, health management information systems or birth registration systems. In fragile or conflict-affected environments, however, where a national government-led beneficiary registration or identification system does not exist, or in contexts that preclude sharing of beneficiary information with government, third-party beneficiary data systems may help to improve information management and delivery of services and are in the best interests of those in need.[64]

There are important ethical and programme considerations associated with the digitisation of information systems and the inclusion of biometrics. A critical question to be asked is whether the digitisation of information systems, and/or the inclusion of biometrics, will result in: gains in efficiency; gains in effectiveness; improved transparency and accountability; value for money, and strengthening of national systems (that is, government platforms versus humanitarian/development actors' platforms versus third party platforms).[64] With personally identifiable information, far greater care needs to be taken than with aggregate information, including: informed consent; right to rectification; right of access; right to erasure; right to portability; and threats to individuals by state and non-state actors. In forced displacement contexts, this brings specific challenges – for instance, whether an unaccompanied minor provide informed consent.

While UN agencies do not legally have to comply with regional and country policies, guidelines and regulations such as the EU General Data Protection Regulation[65, 66] or the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection,[67] they should seek to conform. However, as of December 2018, agencies have yet to adopt a corporate policy providing operational guidance for data privacy in programmes and for personally identifiable information. Annex 3 offers some guidance on biometrics and identification systems. A recommended practice is to involve a protection expert (available in ECHO) in all data protection discussions (such as, around setting up and operating a unified database, collecting biometrics, or sharing operational data while preserving data privacy and security).

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Engaging in Joint Programming

'The EU responses to refugee situations and internal displacement can only be effective if EU humanitarian, development and political action all bring in their specificities in a joint approach.'[12]

Getting Started

The EU should pursue its involvement through its political and development actors and those of the Member States at an early stage of a crisis so as to enable a more coherent and coordinated approach. Full respect for humanitarian principles and close coordination with the host government are key. The objective is to improve living conditions throughout the whole duration of displacement and to implement most effectively solutions that can bring the displacement to an end.[1]

Making a first step towards better social protection across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus requires setting up a core team, possibly informal, of interested individuals working in different relevant sectors and bringing different perspectives. This core team can then progressively connect with an extended team composed of key stakeholders. Personalities count a lot when establishing links between sectors. Spending time building up relationships and trust between personalities is worthwhile.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Be open-minded, ready to learn from innovative approaches and from one another, across DG ECHO, DG DEVCO, DG NEAR and EU Member States, other donors, government bodies, UN agencies, NGOs, national civil society actors, private sector actors, et al.

Connect with people and help build up relations between personalities – institutions do not work together; people work together.

Systematise joint EUD-ECHO-EEAS missions – this is what really helps develop joint assessment and shared views on priorities and programming issues.

Consider setting up a task team who align different sectors associated with social protection (such as, education, health or livelihoods) and can help facilitate the transition from humanitarian assistance in their respective sector, as well as help linking up to their specific line ministry/national institutions.

Outlining a Joint Intervention Strategy

Engaging in a policy and programming process with humanitarian, development and political actors is necessary before focusing down on the use of social protection approaches and systems across the nexus. This may be a Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework (JHDF) exercise or nexus process, or just any collaboration process that has traction in-country to bring humanitarian, development and political actors together. As of December 2018, there is no operational guidance on how to conduct a JHDF/nexus exercise, only a working script. The recent Joint Programming Guidance[68] might help (see, in particular, Section 13 on Joint Programming in Fragile Contexts). The working group meetings that are to be organised before the nexus workshop are even more important than the one-day workshop itself.

➲ *In **Uganda**, ECHO contracted a consultant to kick-start the nexus pilot-country process, focusing on inclusive dialogue and a comprehensive handover to the EU. EU Member States were involved from the start. Conflict analysis was integrated into the initial joint assessment exercise. A kick-off stakeholder workshop confirmed a common understanding of the context and priority actions including political advocacy messages.*

➲ *In **Sudan**, joint analyses and missions conducted under the EU-led nexus pilot-country process and involving the EEAS, EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa team, Member States and nexus adviser to the UN Resident/ Humanitarian Coordinator led to common agreement on the context, programmatic and advocacy priorities and areas for EU action.*

💡 PRACTICAL TIPS

Engage in a (broader) **Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework exercise or Nexus Workshop process** before focusing down on the specific issue of social protection across the nexus.

Have a dedicated person to support the JHDF/nexus process (such as, a consultant) but ensure that leadership remains with the EUD and ECHO.

Secure dedicated time for EUD/ECHO staff to work on the nexus – to see tangible progress, the process needs to be institutionalised.

Engage with EU Member States early on, and whenever possible, outline a shared position as EU donors before engaging with other stakeholders (including, the government, the UN, etc.).

Conducting a joint assessment focused on people's capacities and needs is essential, before engaging in any programming discussion in regard to social protection across the nexus – see examples presented in the Reference Document on 'Social protection across the humanitarian-development nexus.'[13] Political and conflict-related aspects are to be systematically included in the joint assessment exercise, not least to assess the expected duration of displacement. In some contexts, it may be useful to consider the 'triple nexus', that is, adding the 'peace dimension'. This is not to be approached as a one-off exercise; rather it may be turned into a yearly assessment aimed at questioning and revisiting the EU intervention strategy and programming.

💡 PRACTICAL TIPS

Put people's capacities and needs at the centre.

Include conflict analysis by default as part of the joint assessment – contact DEVCO B2, ECHO D1 (civil-military focal point) or NEAR for support and experts.

Conduct protection analysis as part of the joint assessment.

Moving from joint assessment to joint programming is a critical step, often missed. This is when politics, mandates, habits and path dependency kick in. The focus needs to remain on people: agreeing on priority populations to be reached; discussing how to identify and reach vulnerable individuals, how to foster their capacities and address their needs and vulnerabilities, what interventions are needed and how they can best be delivered. It can also mean that household constraints and opportunities are more effectively taken into account during implementation or can help identify potential social tensions between host and displaced communities.

💡 PRACTICAL TIPS

Maintain the focus on people (with the aim of fostering their capacities and addressing their needs) rather than on instruments (wondering which modality is best, and not focusing enough on working together to progressively build the national system).

Work on delivery systems as an entry point to broader collaboration.

Ensure protection aspects remain covered moving from humanitarian to development funding.

Be a principled opportunist with a long-term perspective – pick a policy entry point with potential and build momentum from there towards progressive national system building (for instance, starting with a narrow focus on refugees and later including IDPs, or starting with a focus on aligning humanitarian and social cash transfers and later expanding to other social protection aspects).

Roles and responsibilities need to be clarified towards aligning with the national social protection system. This requires a combination of diplomacy and advocacy, development support and humanitarian action. ECHO and DEVCO can play an advisory role in policy discussions led by EEAS and heads of agency. ECHO may introduce cash transfer projects, for instance, to demonstrate their relevance and effectiveness, but any scale-up should be handed over to DEVCO or NEAR or other development donors and negotiated with the government. The humanitarian principle of independence does not necessarily preclude working with governments and the use of government systems.[4]

⮕ *In its regional strategy for the **Syria** Crisis, Sweden articulated an approach which can be qualified as 'Humanitarian+++'.[69] While working with the government is not possible, it is possible to identify pockets of stability where moves can be made towards integrated service delivery.*

It is important to ensure that different transition streams are being supported. Operationalising the nexus is about strengthening institutions and building systems. It requires joint analysis, collective advocacy, integrated service delivery and joint resource mobilisation. What is done from a humanitarian perspective needs to be consistent with a long-term view – see the note on Coordination of the Operational Guidance Pack on the EU approach to forced displacement and development.[12] Different levels of engagement are to be considered.[13] Depending on the stage of the crisis, an appropriate balance must be found between preparedness work and immediate response. Large-scale displacement is in most cases predictable; a stronger focus on preparedness is needed. Large-scale forced displacement often starts by trickle movements. Peaks occur on average four years after outflows start. Relevant factors for movements such as slow-onset disaster and land degradation can also be foreseen – see the note on Preparedness and First Response in the Operational Guidance Pack on the EU approach to forced displacement and development.[12]

➲ *Lebanon offers a very practical example on how to link policy and operations. ECHO funded the response to the forced displacement crisis for many years, then a donor consortium was established. The EU-Lebanon Compact includes an EU commitment to 'Support the Government of Lebanon in its response to the current humanitarian crisis. Increase support to the most vulnerable Lebanese and refugees'. The Joint Humanitarian Development Framework (JHDF) for Lebanon for 2018-2019 was developed by ECHO and NEAR/EUTF Syria teams in order to further define a comprehensive EU response to the Syrian crisis by coherently addressing humanitarian, mid-term and development priorities. JHDF prioritises support to basic needs/social safety nets through a transition from short-term emergency safety nets into a more systemic and longer-term poverty-alleviation mechanism. In line with the strategic direction of the JHDF, USD 52 million were allocation to build the transition. A central objective of EUTF support is to achieve equity for the most vulnerable in Lebanon, whatever the background or citizenship of those in need. Achieving this vision will take time, including building a long-term commitment from donors and the Lebanese government. Hence, a longer-term objective of EUTF support will be to support the government to develop a clear and coordinated social protection benefits package including: nationally defined set of essential healthcare (under the leadership of the Ministry of Public Health) and education (under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education) services; minimum income security via transfers to facilitate access to essential goods and services (children, working age population); pensions/in-kind transfers that guarantee access to essential goods and services (pensioners).[60]*

💡 PRACTICAL TIPS

Invest in preparedness and measures that can prevent and mitigate massive displacement.

Support a phased transition from humanitarian interventions to development programmes that benefits both displaced and host communities.

Aim to harmonise the level of support to vulnerable households between displaced and host communities – equal vulnerability requires equal support.

Build 'quick wins' into programme plans.

Develop programme linkages and pathways towards self-reliance, for instance, through 'Cash Plus'.

Be realistic and ambitious.

Accept that sometimes nothing can be done towards linking humanitarian action with the national system (for instance, when the government is heavily involved in the conflict).

Mobilising Different Delivery and Funding Streams

Mobilising resources and building fiscal space for the longer term is needed in order to hand over the system. This is a long process, which requires lots of dialogue and underlines the importance of building trust with government counterparts. Governments hosting refugees may be persuaded that they should not only host the refugees but also contribute to their support: donors may provide extra resources to the national population as well as to the refugees; the average refugee has refugee status for 10 years – at some point, it makes sense that the government should want to enable these people to settle and pay into the system (for instance, contributory social protection), to give an exit for the government; countries understand that they will get waves of refugees, so they can recognise that building resilience of refugees as early as possible is necessary. It is possible to mobilise budget support, for instance, to help the government reinforce building blocks of the national social protection system (such as a unified social registry or an asylum registration system).

➲ *In **Greece**, the unprecedented arrival of forcibly displaced persons in 2015–2016 required a full range of humanitarian needs to be quickly supported and essential services such as shelter and protection, including health, to be offered to the people in need. After an initial traditional ECHO-funded humanitarian response, the EU set up its Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation programme (ESTIA). Implemented by the UNHCR, and aligned with the national social assistance programme for Greek destitute populations, it provides refugees and their family with a basic social safety net that allows them to meet their basic needs, using local markets and renting urban accommodation with dignity, in a cost-efficient way. From mid-2019, the programme will be handed over and will continue under the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (EMAS), freeing resources for other crises. DG HOME will provide budget support to the government. Aligning the emergency cash assistance to the national system has been essential for this transition.[32]*

💡 PRACTICAL TIPS

Be creative to seize funding opportunities, deal with constraints attached to planning and funding cycles and contracts, and make them operate in synergies within a coherent intervention strategy developed under a 10-year timeframe.

Ensure flexibility in funding/contingency to have room for new arrivals.

Favour 'reliable delivery' over 'ideal design', and ring-fence delivery.

Consider contracting the same implementing partners for different, complementary activities under humanitarian and development funding.

Develop clear communication about downscaling of assistance/alignment with national levels so that beneficiaries can have visibility and plan ahead.

Involve a protection expert (available in ECHO) **in all data protection discussions** (setting up and operating a unified database, collecting biometrics, sharing operational data while preserving data privacy and security, etc.).

Supporting social protection across the nexus requires engaging with a variety of implementing partners. It is possible to choose one best-placed UN agency to deliver multi-purpose cash transfers. Each context is different, and this is to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Still, it is important to maintain support from other UN agencies. Indeed, social protection does not concern one ministry only. To maintain the social contract between citizens and their government, it is good to maintain different contracts for more buy-in, for instance, the Ministry of Agriculture working with the FAO, so as not to let that ministry lose traction in the crisis. Blending facilities can also be a tool to leverage additional public and private resources.[1] In all cases, a careful assessment of stakeholders' capacity and detailed process mapping are of utmost importance before the start of a programme.

➲ *In **Turkey**, no capacity assessment or process mapping was conducted to track the application process and identify potential bottlenecks prior to the start of the programme. This had important consequences for implementation. The ESSN design underestimated the capacity of the Turkish Government, overestimated the capacity of the Turkish Red Crescent, and the capacity of other agencies was not looked at at all. In contrast, before planning the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE), UNICEF conducted a detailed feasibility assessment that examined the strengths, bottlenecks and capacities of the national social assistance institutions, systems and operational processes; this informed the CCTE programme design.[32]*

💡 PRACTICAL TIPS

Ask the community of practice for additional, specific hints and tips:

- The global, open online community on socialprotection.org (accessible at https://goo.gl/aRzVqb) allows reaching out to a network of over 170 practitioners;

- The dedicated group on capacity4dev (accessible at https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/sp-nexus) offers an additional resource for EU-specific issues.

Annex 1

Rights and social protection access for different types of displaced populations[15]

- **Refugee** advocates argue that once recognised on a *prima facie* basis as a refugee, an individual should be able to presumptively enjoy all the rights, including to social protection, granted under the 1951 Convention,[25] which sets out a number of rights that provide a framework for refugees' full social protection. According to the 1951 Convention, Article 23, 'The Contracting States shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as is accorded to their nationals'. However, in practice states may limit prima facie refugees' access to these rights, for instance by restricting their access to labour markets and insisting upon refugees' encampment.

- **Asylum-seeker** status should be short-term and temporary. Asylum-seekers have the right not to be returned to their country of origin until their claim for refugee status is adjudicated, but any social protection rights are dependent upon national laws. In practice, asylum-seekers can wait several months or years for their claims to be heard, and asylum-seekers' rights to work or access social protection are often heavily restricted, particularly in the first year after arrival.

- **Internally Displaced Persons** are very often citizens of the country in which they are resident, or in other cases are for the most part habitual residents, many with similar rights to nationals. The cornerstone of IDP protection is non-discrimination, i.e. equal recognition of IDPs' rights without regard to their displacement. This includes their rights to social protection, which should be recognised as equivalent to those other citizens or habitual residents. However, as a result of their forced displacement, IDPs may face specific challenges in realising their rights, especially if a state is actively hostile to the IDP group (e.g. ethnic discrimination) or where conflict or natural disaster has destroyed infrastructure and weakened state capacity.

- **Returnees** are generally citizens of the state to which they are returning, and should be able to claim equal rights to social protection alongside other citizens. In the case of refugee voluntary repatriation, the basis for claiming such rights/non-discriminatory treatment may also have been set out in a Tripartite Agreement. However, returnees may struggle to obtain adequate social protection from the state due to weak state and/or market capacity, especially in early post-conflict settings, and may have specific needs (e.g. housing) which result from their former displacement.

Annex 2

Key questions for assessing the readiness of a given social protection programme to deliver humanitarian cash transfers

	1. Individuals to be reached	2. Needs to be covered	3. Payment mechanism	4. Accompanying measures
Preliminary needs assessment	• Which areas are (most) affected? What are the characteristics of (most) affected individuals/ households?	• What are the (financial/ material) needs of affected individuals? Are these needs temporary, or recurrent/long-term?	• Are cash transfers appropriate to meet the needs of affected individuals?	• What accompanying measures are necessary?
Key aspects to consider	• Does the social protection programme have good coverage of the **geographical areas** affected by the crisis? If not, how easy would it be to expand the programme to affected areas? • Are those enrolled in the programme among the worst affected by the crisis? Are there legal barriers for enrolling displaced people in the programme? If not, how easy would it be to expand the programme to (other) affected **households**?	• Do the social protection programme **objectives** align with the specific objectives of the (foreseen) humanitarian response? • *If so*, what do reviews and evaluations tell us about the appropriateness of the programme design to meet objectives? • *If not*, which aspects of the design may still be useful to meet humanitarian objectives?	• Are there **robust** administrative systems with good capacity to deliver timely and accurate payments? Can this capacity be supported? Are payment distribution networks functioning post disaster? • Is the **lead-time** for the delivery mechanism short enough in view of humanitarian needs (voucher/ATM card/SIM card delivery)? • Is the delivery mechanism **accessible** to affected individuals (e.g. refugees)?	• Does the programme include any **complementary services** (e.g. education, health, psychological support, livelihood support, etc.) valuable for the humanitarian response? Can this capacity be supported? Are complementary services functioning post disaster, and accessible to affected individuals (including non-nationals/refugees)?

	1. Individuals to be reached	2. Needs to be covered	3. Payment mechanism	4. Accompanying measures
Extent to which the programme could be used	**TARGETING CRITERIA:** • Could the same enrolment criteria be used for the humanitarian response? • Could enrolment criteria be relaxed to include other affected and vulnerable groups during the crisis period (e.g. relaxing conditions, cut-off point, etc.)? **DATABASE:** • Is the programme underpinned by a social registry/single registry? • What personal identifying document is required and accepted? • What personal identifying data is recorded (biometrics, name, address, national ID number, phone number/SIM, specifically assigned registration number, etc.)? • Is beneficiary data and account information stored in an electronic management information system? • Does this contain information on other social protection programme beneficiaries? Does it contain data on non-beneficiaries? • How reliable is the programme database? How often is this data updated? • How is data protected? **ENROLMENT PROCESS:** • How does the enrolment of beneficiaries take place; is this on a rolling basis or only at certain times? • How well do people understand the application process and how decisions are made; is there any evidence of political bias, or corruption, in the registration and approval process; or of any delays/bottlenecks? • How easy and fast would it be to run a new enrolment campaign, in existing programme areas and/or new areas?	• Are the current transfer value and frequency adequate to cover needs? • Are there any procedures for modifying the programme in the event of a crisis? • Could the transfer value be topped up if needed (e.g. during the crisis period)? How fast is the decision process likely to be? • Could the frequency of the transfer be increased if necessary (e.g. during the crisis period)? How fast is the decision process likely to be?	• Can the current delivery system be used as it is? • Can the payment distribution network be expanded to cover new areas? • Could a different delivery mechanism be incorporated (voucher/ATM card/SIM card delivery)? • Can processes be modified to meet humanitarian needs, and accommodate people with additional support needs or who are not familiar with the system?	• Can current complementary services be used as they are? • Does the programme have the capacity to take on an additional caseload, or can this capacity be supported?
Extent to which other elements of the system could be used	• Could other existing systems/databases be considered to identify and reach affected individuals (e.g. civil registry, unified registry, humanitarian database, etc.)? • What is the policy and practice on data sharing?	• Are there existing regulations enabling or restricting the extension of social protection to particular groups (e.g. non-nationals, asylum-seekers, etc.)?	• Could other existing systems be considered to deliver cash transfers to affected individuals (e.g. post offices, humanitarian systems, etc.) as an alternative or complementary measure?	• Could other existing services be relevant and made available to affected individuals?

Additional questions for deciding whether or not to link with the national system to deliver humanitarian cash transfers

Humanitarian response	System building	Administrative feasibility	Internal capacity

• What are the opportunities and risks associated with using the national system, in terms of:
  • Timeliness of the response;
  • Adequate coverage of affected populations;
  • Adequate coverage of needs?
	• Are there any opportunities to help strengthen the national system (especially in case of recurrent/long-term needs)?
	• Are there any risks that linking will overburden/do harm to the social protection programme/system? If so, could they be mitigated?
		• Are there restrictions preventing the EU from transferring funds to government?
		• If so, could an alternative set-up be envisioned (e.g. humanitarian/development partners directly paying transfers, but relying on the system)?
			• Does the EU and its humanitarian/development partners have the required setup/resources to effectively deliver humanitarian cash transfers via, or in alignment with, the national system?
			• If not, can additional resources/support be mobilised?

Annex 3

Guidance on biometrics and identification systems [64]

- **Gains in effectiveness and efficiency, and value for money** – The decision to digitise, as well as collect personally identifiable information, including biometrics, should be assessed individually to determine the expected impact against the cost.

- **Ethical considerations** – When capturing personally identifiable information, including biometrics, areas including informed consent, delinking provision of critical humanitarian services to such consent, and protecting information from misuse by government and non-state actors, must be prioritised.

- **System strengthening** – It is critical to assess, when selecting a strategy as well as considering any proposed solution, whether we are trying to address a short-term humanitarian crisis, strengthen national systems, or both. In the case of the later, issues of data sovereignty and ownership, as well as sustainable technical and financial support models, should be considered.

- **National laws, policies and guidelines** – Relevant regional and national policies, laws and regulations should be fully understood and addressed in any proposed strategy or solution.

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