Responding to Refugee Crises in Developing Countries: What Can We Learn From Evaluations?

This report draws from the evaluation work of OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members and aims to strengthen the evidence base to help improve future responses to refugee crises in developing countries.

Key topics covered in the working paper include:

- Bridging the gap between humanitarian and development programming
- Strengthening the international response to protracted crises
- Improving whole-of-government approaches in refugee contexts
- Learning from work in urban settings
- Improving access to employment and quality education for refugees and host communities
- Mobilising financing mechanisms for refugee crises in middle income countries
- Examining financing in response to the Syria crisis

The OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation is an international forum that brings together evaluation managers and specialists from development co-operation ministries and agencies in OECD DAC member countries and multilateral development institutions. The network has been instrumental in developing key international norms and standards for evaluation.

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What can we learn from evaluation?

A large number of evaluations look at different responses to the refugee crises in developing countries. This paper draws from evaluation findings to highlight key lessons and recommendations for more strategic approaches going forward.

Evaluation evidence reveals many practical barriers to improving outcomes for the millions of refugees fleeing conflict and oppression. While international consensus at the policy level is increasing, it is not a simple task to turn policy goals into on-the-ground results. There are no silver-bullet solutions or one-size-fits-all approaches to deal with the complexity of situations related to forced displacement. Evaluations shed light on the obstacles, while pointing to areas of success and to promising new initiatives.

The main working paper is complemented by three case studies that look at how policy objectives have been implemented in specific country contexts.

**Afghanistan – case study:**
**Refugee country of origin**

Afghanistan has been a major refugee country of origin for over 30 years and for most of this time was the country with the largest refugee population worldwide. The case study on Afghanistan looks at whole-of-government efforts by OECD member countries. Specifically, it looks at how states have co-ordinated development, diplomatic and defence resources. The case study examines efforts by the international community to address the root causes of conflict and help promote stability and state building objectives in Afghanistan since 2001.

**Ethiopia and Uganda – case study:**
**Refugee countries of destination**

Conflict and food insecurity in countries in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, as well as in South Sudan and Yemen have contributed to large refugee populations in Ethiopia and Uganda. Both countries are attempting to deal with sizable refugee populations and large ongoing influxes. This case study looks at efforts by the international community to support the approaches adopted in Ethiopia and Uganda towards refugee self-reliance. The case study compares outcomes in the countries, with a specific focus on access to employment and business creation, including legal and socio-economic barriers.

**South Sudan – case study:**
**Refugee country of origin**

High hopes for South Sudan’s future as an independent state were dashed when fighting broke out in December 2013 leading to famine, persistent ethnic conflict and severe economic challenges. The ongoing conflict in South Sudan has led to large-scale forced displacement. This case study examines conditions within South Sudan as a major country of origin in today’s refugee crisis and underscores the linkages between internally displaced persons and South Sudanese refugees. The case study highlights the importance of understanding local contexts and root drivers of conflict and displacement. Finally, it reviews evaluations of past efforts in South Sudan, including state building and refugee resettlement.