



STRENGTHENING PROTECTION CAPACITIES IN HOST COUNTRIES(HRC)

INTRODUCTION

Strengthening protection capacities in host countries has been a recurring and cross-cutting theme throughout the globe. The subject is complex and needs to be considered separately since it underpins the success of endeavours to improve protection in the areas as follows: i) protection of refugees in mass influx situations; ii) reception arrangements; iii) fair and expeditious asylum procedures, including the return of those not in need of international protection; and iv) the realization of durable solutions. In the context of UNHCR's international protection mandate, efforts are geared to enhancing the capabilities of States to meet international legal obligations in the refugee protection area. They also contribute to strengthening the rule of law by creating national protection structures. Another important component of these efforts is the fostering of international cooperation to ensure a fair sharing of the burden and responsibility of receiving and hosting refugees. The complexity of the endeavour to strengthen protection capacities stems not least from the fact that, while the goals of these efforts may be similar from country to country, their actual content will inevitably differ, depending on factors such as the developmental situation of the country, the limits of its own resources, the degree of legal sophistication of its asylum system, and the extent of its experience in handling refugee situations.

Understanding of strengthening protection capacities

The strengthening of protection capacities requires both an approach and a set of activities. In its broadest sense it concerns the reinforcement of human, institutional or community performance, the strengthening of skills and knowledge, as well as the promotion of positive attitudes, on a sustainable basis. It is based on networking with partners at various levels, is highly participatory by nature and intimately linked to a nationally driven reform process. It involves the provision of technical support, including training, of advisory services, of specialized expertise, and of financial and material assistance

The role of states

States have primary responsibility for providing protection to refugees. As with international protection generally, capacity-building initiatives most often benefit from the participation and cooperation of a range of actors in a burden- and responsibility-sharing context. At the Regional Meeting of the Global Consultations held in Cairo in July 2001, participants specifically identified insufficient international support for local capacity-building as resulting in disproportionate burdens being shouldered by States in the region, many of which are grappling with other economic and social problems.

Refugees and asylum-seekers continue to arrive in countries with limited resources. Their presence can burden local infrastructure, environment and resources, on occasion testing the limits of capacity and hospitality severely. Refugees and asylum-seekers are now too often portrayed as a burden, a cause for social and economic instability, or a threat to national security. Creative new approaches are called for from the international community.

Refugees can be seen as an opportunity rather than a problem. Their capacities can be recognized and they can be empowered to adapt to their new environment and work towards their own solutions. **They can also benefit hosts as a source of labour and expertise, by expanding consumer markets for local goods and in some circumstances by justifying increased foreign aid.** The anchoring of refugee issues into the development agenda reduces the gap between humanitarian assistance and development efforts and has to be one goal of new approaches. Factors impeding the effective integration of refugee and development policies and plans include lack of support in donor and host communities and weak coordination between refugee and development agencies. Greater attention now

needs to be paid to overcome these difficulties so as to maximize the potential of refugees for local communities, ensuring they become integral and contributory factors in the development of localities and regions.

Strengthening Protection Capacity and Support to Host Communities in Tanzania

The lack of institutional capacity undermines the creation of effective partnerships which also impacts service delivery. UNHCR along with GoT and States is conducting an assessment of how the capacity of hosting communities to render effective protection can be enhanced in the new settlements in the Kigoma/Kagera region as well as the old settlements located in Rukwa and Tabora regions. Provision for additional material support, funding, and combating negative attitudes are some of the issues being undertaken by the country at present.

Strengthening Refugee Protection, Assistance and Support to Host Communities in Kenya and Comprehensive Plan of Action for Somali Refugees

UNHCR and the Government of Kenya have jointly undertaken projects namely **Strengthening Protection Capacity Project (SPCP)** is to find ways to strengthen the capacity to receive and protect refugees in Kenya, including enhancing their means of self-reliance and expanding opportunities for durable solutions and other being the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Somali Refugees (CPA) to find comprehensive solutions to an array of problems facing Somali refugees in the region, and those of the internally displaced within Somalia.

THE ROLE OF UNHCR

Strengthening protection capacities is a function inherent in UNHCR's international protection mandate. In relation to well-established asylum systems, they are broadly directed at promoting public awareness and support, providing a solid basis for refugee protection in national legislation, policy and practice, as well as developing strong partnerships with a wide range of actors to ensure adequate provision of international protection. Countries with well-established institutions of their own can, in addition,

become important partners for UNHCR in efforts to build and strengthen protection capacities where systems are still being set up.

In many countries of the world, particularly in Eastern Europe, large parts of Asia, Africa and South America, asylum systems are still in the earlier stages of development. Some are fledgling, while others are being consolidated. Here strengthening protection capacities is a responsibility which embraces a range of activities, from initial institution-building to the development of capacity to enable refugees to become self-reliant, pending the identification of durable solutions.

Thus, the activities, initiatives and best practices needs to set out to assist States and other international factors in giving content to regional and national strategies so as to strengthen protection capacities.

Come let's debate on the remedial and innovative measures that could be undertaken to strengthen the capacity by host countries with a global perspective.