



**WARM
WELCOMES,
LURKING
TENSIONS**

**Vital lessons from the global south for
countries hosting refugees from Ukraine**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover photo: A child who fled from Ukraine gets a warm welcome in a World Vision Child Friendly Space in Huși, near to Siret border, Romania. She has fun playing with Mihaela Voicu, Child Protection Specialist, World Vision Romania. © 2022 World Vision

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Methodology	8
Comparative Case Studies	9
Recommendations	12
Descriptive Case Studies	16
Endnotes	26



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The response to those displaced by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has been a hugely positive one. Some even say there has been more expressed and enacted sympathy in the West towards refugees from Ukraine than any other large-scale displacement crisis since the Second World War. Communities in major refugee hosting countries like Poland, Romania and Moldova, who have seen a combined total of over 5.7 million refugees cross over their borders already, have shown an incredible level of hospitality to people from Ukraine.¹

In comparison with other large-scale refugee crises, such as Syria, the Rohingya, Venezuela, Somalia, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and many others, this too follows a similar pattern. In the initial phases of any refugee crisis, host communities are usually welcoming, yet tensions can and inevitably do arise and relations often deteriorate. This report asks the question: "What and how can countries hosting refugees from Ukraine learn from their peers in Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East as this crisis evolves?"

Tensions tend to materialise due to competition over work, accommodation or services, which causes resentment as seen in Syria's neighbouring and hosting countries.² It also comes from a perceived preference by international aid organisations to support refugees over host communities, and cultural or religious differences, as seen in Venezuela's neighbouring and hosting countries.³ This has led to situations worsening, such as increased levels of poverty, violence and xenophobia.^{4 5}

Contexts like Uganda, which is seen by many to have one of the most progressive approaches to refugees, offer many perspectives on how to best accommodate refugees while reducing tensions with host communities.⁶ Contexts like Lebanon however, where tensions between refugees and host communities have been allowed to grow unabated and show no signs of being addressed, offer many lessons on what to avoid doing.⁷

This report has been produced to listening to the global south, where major refugee influxes have been experienced recently. It is our hope that their experiences can guide World Vision's ongoing thinking



8.8 M

refugees have fled from Ukraine so far.

and work, and the work of the international community, NGOs, CSOs, faith communities and faith-based organisations, national and local governments, to help mitigate social tension – which this report finds is at risk of developing further in Ukraine refugee hosting countries. In fact, our research shows:



1. Messaging that could stoke anti-refugee tensions is already being spread in Romania, Moldova, Poland and across Central and Eastern Europe



2. Whilst not a major issue yet, tensions are beginning to develop in some host countries. Children may face risks such as verbal and physical abuse between refugee and host communities, human trafficking and more as early as February 2023.



3. The international community needs to act now in order to prevent the situation deteriorating to dangerous levels like in Lebanon and Bangladesh.

Findings from comparative case studies show that sources of social tensions that previously led to clashes between refugee and host communities in some major refugee crisis contexts like Lebanon, Uganda, Chile, Kenya and Bangladesh are actually on the rise in Romania, Moldova and Poland. Previous experience indicates that tensions start to rise on average one year after the refugee influx.

Emerging sources of tension could include:



Economic competition over humanitarian resources



Lack of access to common and basic services like education and health care



Disinformation and misinformation from mass media and social media



The host community's lack of confidence in public institutions, especially in countries with economic and social challenges like Moldova and Romania



Ethnic and cultural differences that intensify the lack of social affinity



The increased burden on women who are now the heads of their households



Competition around work to ensure financial resources



Unfairness, or perceived unfairness, around access to support provided.

To address the potential intensification of tensions and to stop them from worsening, this report puts forward nine recommendations for the response to the refugees created by the Ukrainian crisis:



Improve infrastructure that benefits all communities



Create communication campaigns on co-existence, human rights and education about refugees



Facilitate opportunities for interaction between host and refugee communities



Develop interventions targeted at children



Employ staff from host and refugee communities in refugee response projects



Leverage local markets, goods and services to strengthen economic resilience



Strengthen churches, places of worship, faith groups and CSOs



Engage influential figures in host communities



Consider the advantages of remote working and schooling.

We also have one additional recommendation, beyond the Ukraine response and based on the research, to provide additional support to address host community and refugee tensions in places where they are currently worsening, including Lebanon and Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

Despite weeks of speculation and analysis, the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine on February 24 seemed to take the world by surprise. Certainly, most of the 43.4 million pre-war Ukrainians (including 7.5 million children) did not expect that the situation would deteriorate to the extent that it has.

There are currently **15.9 MILLION PEOPLE DISPLACED⁸**



8.8 MILLION of whom have become refugees since February 24

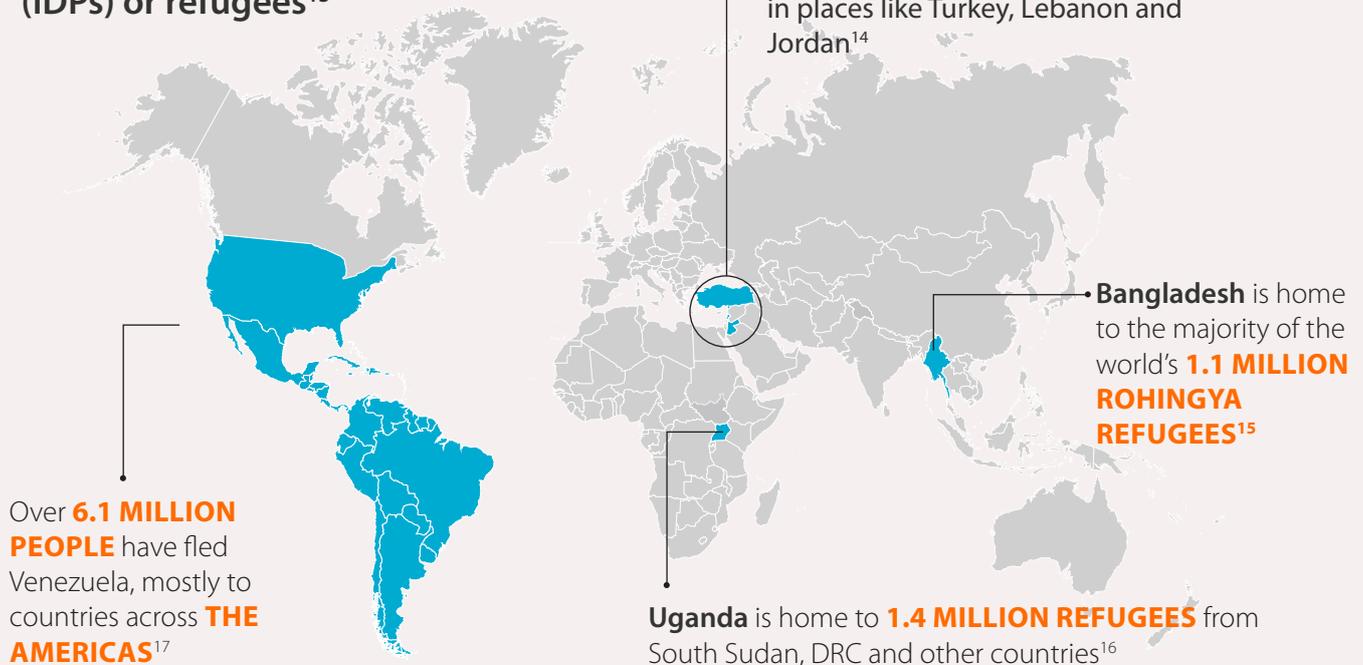


This represents the fastest displacement crisis since the Second World War.^{9 10} Over the past 11 years, Syria has seen more than one in every four of its pre-war population flee abroad. We are currently seeing more people returning to Ukraine than new refugees,¹¹ however, if we assume that the Ukraine war becomes similarly protracted and the same proportion flee, this would mean a further five million children and families who may yet seek refuge abroad. There could be more than 13 million refugees from Ukraine globally. The Syria war has lasted over 11 years and it is shocking to think of any refugee population requiring host community support for that long.

While the West may have been shocked that a conflict and an ensuing refugee crisis could happen in Europe, many across the globe know that anyone can become a refugee at any time due to shocks like conflict, natural disasters and economic crises.¹²

Today, at least

100 MILLION PEOPLE live as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees¹³

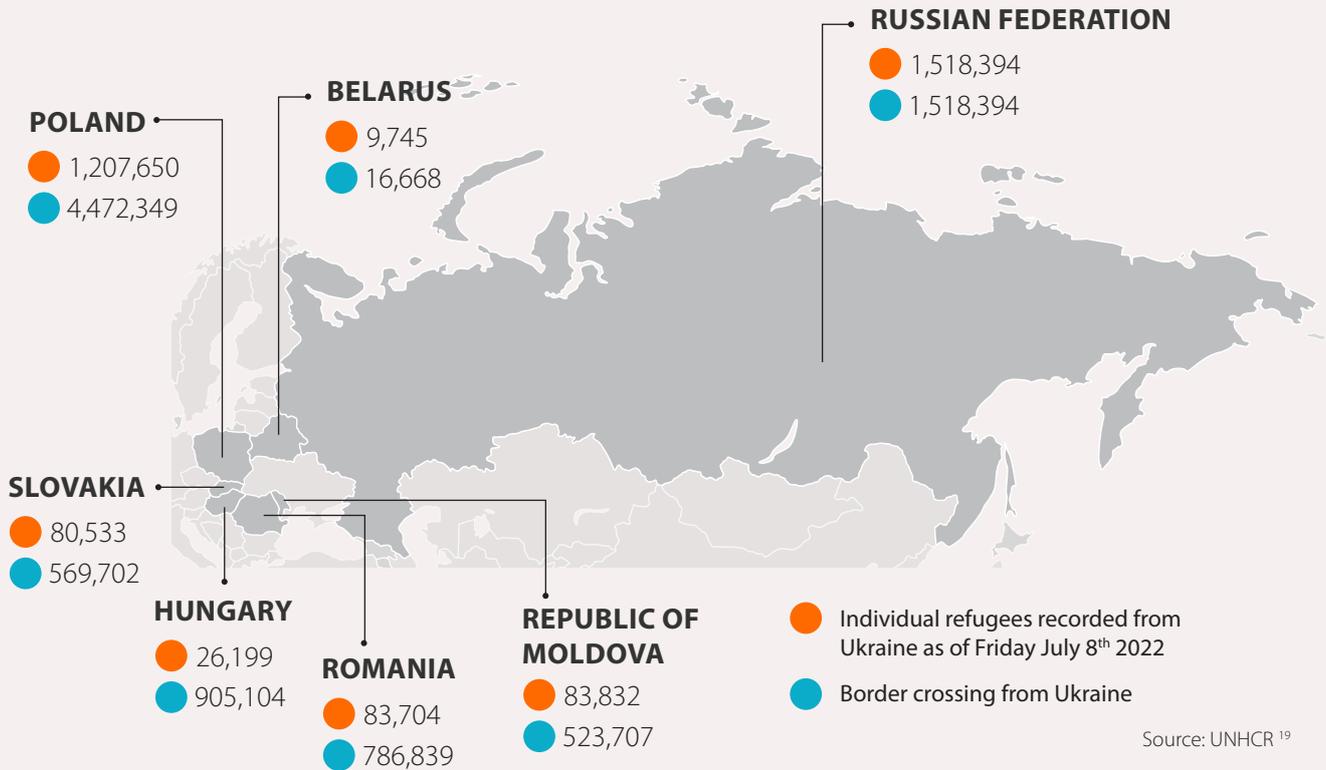


On top of these contexts, countries are still receiving refugees from Afghanistan, Yemen, Tigray and many other contexts.



Prior to the Ukraine conflict, 86% of the world's refugee population was hosted in developing countries.¹⁸ They offer a wealth of lessons on how best to host refugees and deal with complex humanitarian realities.

The conflict in Ukraine has torn families apart, with so many women and children attempting to escape bombardment and artillery fire, and having to leave husbands, fathers, sons and brothers behind.



The initial response from host communities towards Ukrainian refugees has been incredibly hospitable.²⁰ However, previous and ongoing refugee influxes show that in all refugee-hosting contexts this is often the case, and, over time, tensions can and do materialise.

It is a misconception that refugee hosting contexts often begin with hostilities. In fact, this is almost never the case.

In 2014, three years after the Syria crisis, a study was conducted by Oxford University and the Refugee Study Centre in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Turkey and the Golan Heights to explore the impact of the displacement of Syrian refugees to all these hosting countries. The findings show that across Syria's borders, neighbouring countries struggled to respond to the needs of the countless refugees that they host. After four years, social tensions became rooted in competition between citizens and Syrian refugees for health care, shelter, water, jobs and places in school. In addition, the longevity of the crisis accentuated

the vulnerability of host communities, and tensions between refugee and host communities exacerbated protection risks, especially for women and children.²¹ Since then, the situation further deteriorated with increasing negative sentiments against the refugee population, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic deepened the vulnerabilities of host and refugee communities.

Another assessment study conducted by REACH in 2018, in an area of Brazil that hosts Venezuelan asylum seekers, reported increased verbal and physical abuse between Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers and host community members. A concrete result reflecting the change in community dynamics was the reported decrease in aid from host community members.²²

All refugee crises are unique, and, in that respect, this is the one of the few things they all have in common. However, another commonality is that host communities tend to enthusiastically open their doors initially, prior to tensions developing. In response to displacement from Ukraine, the international community has a timely opportunity right now to learn from past experiences and prevent hostilities from rising.

METHODOLOGY

World Vision has been responding to humanitarian crises for over 70 years, including, most recently, the conflict in Ukraine. This report applies learnings from our previous work to our own operations, as well as sharing best practices for all those responding to the crisis in Ukraine. We spoke with members of our humanitarian response in Ukraine, and with those from other major refugee crises about relations between refugees and host communities: how tensions developed, how they were mitigated and what lessons can be learned and shared.

This study was conducted using two research methods: multiple descriptive case studies and comparative case study.

Multiple descriptive case studies: Descriptive case study data was collected through key informant interviews (KIIs) in countries directly impacted by the Ukraine crisis (Poland, Romania and Moldova) and in countries where World Vision is responding to other displacement crises (Lebanon, Chile, Uganda, Kenya). The KII participants were selected from World Vision

staff who were identified by their peers as having a deep knowledge of the contexts. We asked them a specific set of questions. One set of questions was used for those who were working in Poland, Romania and Moldova – host countries directly impacted by the Ukraine crisis. Another set of questions were for experts involved in World Vision’s responses to other displacement crises over the past 25 years.

Comparative case study: Following the descriptive case studies, a comparative case study was conducted. The comparative case study involved the analysis of similarities, differences and patterns across contexts. The comparative case study was also used to explore how social cohesion interventions failed or succeeded in some contexts, and how these interventions can be better tailored to the Ukrainian context to prevent social tensions.

We will first examine the case study analysis for our overall findings and recommendations. We encourage you to then continue to explore the richness of the case studies themselves later in this report.



Viko and her sister Hindim comparing the most ripe tomatoes after harvesting. World Vision Uganda is supporting refugee households and the host community to meet their nutritional needs through provision of vegetable seeds. © 2021 Derrick Kyatuka/ World Vision

COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

1. Similarities, patterns and trends in global refugee crises

1.1 Sources of social tensions



Humanitarian resources: Low- and middle-income countries host the majority of refugees worldwide. In most of these countries, local communities often experience a high level of poverty and face increased economic vulnerability. Their economic conditions are not necessarily better than those seeking refuge in their communities.²³ This situation always leads to economic competition over scarce resources between host and refugee communities and causes increased social tensions. One of the major concerns in any refugee crisis is the discrepancy between humanitarian needs and the resources available to meet those needs. Ukraine is remarkable in that the funding available to respond to the humanitarian crisis is unprecedentedly high. However, national governments only have so many resources available to them and a sudden increase in the population for countries like Moldova, Romania and even Poland means resources may eventually become stretched. This can create competition between host and refugee communities, which in turns can lead to the development of tensions.



Access to basic services: The lack of equal opportunities for all members of society creates rifts between refugees and host communities. The lack of access to basic services such as health care and education leads to intensifying competition over resources. Influxes of refugees can cause economic shocks. For example, in Jordan following the Syrian refugee crisis, demands for places in school, sanitation, housing, food and energy spiked causing negative economic impacts for host communities.²⁴ Economic shocks impact both host and refugee communities, harming social cohesion between the communities. Any societal or economic issues such as ongoing cost of living increases, spikes in crime or unemployment could see refugees scapegoated, as they have been in other contexts.^{25 26} It is important that resilience to any potential economic shocks is boosted in both communities.



Disinformation and misinformation:

Another cause of social tensions is related to the role of mass and social media. Media can be a strong mechanism for spreading the right information

about understanding and tolerance, however, this is not something we frequently observe in refugee crises. When media outlets allow intolerant and discriminatory opinions of different communities to be expressed, it negatively impacts public attitudes. In Lebanon, media and popular culture provide insight into current social anxieties and pre-existing stereotypes of Syrians. This reflects real fears of changing demographics and the strain on over-extended social services.²⁷ In Poland²⁸ and Romania,²⁹ disinformation about refugees is circulating in social media, including the privilege refugees have over host community members, non-Ukrainians crossing the border, aggressive refugee behaviour and spikes in crime. Misinformation causes individuals to express confusion and anger, leading to clashes between refugee and host communities.



Confidence in public institutions:

In contexts that we analysed; we noticed a considerable absence of confidence in public institutions.³⁰ This is a result of already established mistrust in governmental institutions,

and the ability (or inability) of institutions to deliver services to host communities. In Iraq, the added element of Syrian refugees within host societies produced an added negative impact on confidence levels in key societal institutions and perceptions of safety.³¹ Levels of trust between societal groups have progressively decreased and communities have sought protection in outlets other than the Iraqi state. Strong patronage networks can exist within such communities which strengthen communal ties, and weak networks exist between differing communities and between communities and government.



Ethnic and cultural differences:

Risks of violent outbursts are further exacerbated where ethnic and cultural differences overlap with economic tensions. Cultural differences intensify the lack of social

affinity between host communities and refugees. In Lebanon, the differences in lifestyles, customs and



A staff member gather children to give them meals and snacks in a refugee center in Arica, Chile. © 2022 Fabrizio Guzmán/ World Vision

traditions between the host society and refugees further undermine communal harmony. In Moldova, for linguistic, cultural and logistical reasons, authorities decided to separate Roma refugees from ethnic Ukrainians to prevent tensions between the two ethnicities and better provide for their specific needs.³² This situation is causing the Roma to feel discriminated against and may lead to a growth in anger and confusion across host and refugee communities, and even between refugee populations.



Increased financial burden on women:

Most of the 8.8 million Ukrainian refugees are women, children and the elderly.³³ They left behind their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers who were ordered to

stay and serve in the military. Once Ukrainian women reach a place of refuge, they will face problems finding decent work. Female Ukrainian refugees are also shouldering new financial burdens as the sole heads of households, while at the same time caring for children and elderly relatives. Mothers with babies and toddlers will have even fewer options. Even if host countries provide childcare, Ukrainian women will have to then attempt to find work, which is made more difficult in some countries due to the language barrier. Although Poland, Ukraine, and Moldova allow refugees from Ukraine to work legally, informal barriers may still create risks of human trafficking or create a push factor to

encourage women to consider returning home to Ukraine before the conflict is over.

1.2 Response from host community to influx

How people in host communities react to a major influx of refugees is varied. Some people are hostile towards refugees and unlikely to change. Others are welcoming and unlikely to change. Most people are conflicted, trying to balance an empathetic response with how their own situation is made more precarious.

The situation in Ukraine is comparable to other refugee hosting contexts in relation to the initial positive response. Turkey hosts over three million Syrian refugees, making up almost 15% of the total population. The community response to the refugees was initially welcoming and attitudes were largely unified over the need to help Syrians seeking shelter. Tensions developed eventually when there were spikes in crime, begging and competition for labour.³⁴ Now refugee rights activists in the country claim there is an alarming spike of violence targeting refugees.³⁵ Similarly, the situation for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh changed from empathy and solidarity to discontent and resistance.³⁶ As our research supports, messaging that could stoke anti-refugee tensions is already being spread in Romania, Moldova, Poland and across Central and Eastern Europe, and may soon begin to harden attitudes.^{37 38 39}

1.3 Impact of social tensions

Studies show that rising social tensions between communities have the potential to generate secondary conflicts in host countries. Access to basic goods and services and livelihood opportunities are also influenced by social tensions. As tensions rise, isolation becomes an unfortunate coping mechanism for displaced populations, keeping women at home and children out of school. With economic competition leading to frustration, scapegoating and discrimination, access to equitable employment opportunities decreases. For the time being, none of these potential impacts are seen in Poland, Moldova or Romania. However, the Ukrainian refugee crisis could last years, with host communities becoming tired of expensive humanitarian responses. Social tensions might grow and generate secondary conflicts in these countries.

2. Analysis of differences between Ukraine and other global refugee crises



Refugee accommodation: A key difference between contexts like Moldova, Romania and Poland compared to those which hosted large numbers of Rohingya and Syrian refugees, is that many of the refugees

are heading to urban areas and this provides a distinct set of protection and livelihood issues compared to living in tented refugee settlements. Looking at other examples, such as East Africa, attitudes from the host community towards refugees tend to be more positive when refugees are in demarcated camp settings in more rural areas compared to urban settings where there is greater competition.



Access to employment: Another major difference between Ukrainian refugees and many other major refugee contexts is that Ukrainian refugees have the right to work. Under the European Commission's

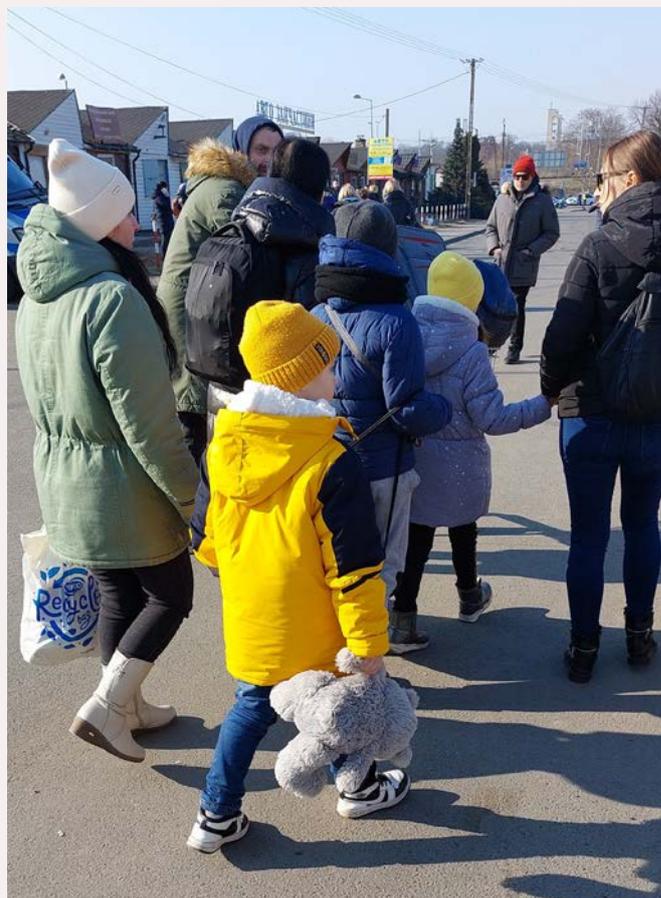
Temporary Protection Directive, they have access to employment until at least March 4, 2023.⁴⁰ This potentially avoids what happened to many Syrian and Rohingya refugees who took up informal employment, causing tensions to develop over accusations of refugees undercutting workers from host communities. But it does mean that there are more Ukrainians competing for jobs in local job markets, so it may not address tensions.



EU approach: The approach and attitude of Europe and the West is also a stark difference between the Ukrainian situation and other contexts. As a desirable destination for many,⁴¹ over the past decades,

many Western governments have limited the number of refugees entering their countries, and in cases like the Syrian refugee crisis, instead concentrated support on countries neighbouring Syria for them to host refugees.⁴² With Ukraine, there is a considerable amount of public pressure and political will on behalf of these governments to take in (or be seen to take in) more refugees.^{43 44 45 46}

Poland and Hungary, for example, are EU members and thus part of the Schengen area, so anyone entering these countries – thanks to the EU's Temporary Protection Directive – can go on to any other Schengen country, as well as some non-Schengen countries like Romania. This is not an option available to refugees from other contexts, where refugees are often concentrated in neighbouring countries and unable to transit further. Ukrainians have more displacement destination options compared to other refugee crises, which takes the pressure off neighbouring countries.



Refugees arriving to Poland. © 2022 Patricio Cuevas-Parra/ World Vision



Ivanya is a gentle, thoughtful boy who fled Ukraine with his mother and sister. Ivanya is staying with more than 400 refugees at a warehouse and office centre in Iasi, Romania © 2022 Brianna Piazza/World Vision

RECOMMENDATIONS

We forecast that, at the current trajectory, it is likely that tensions between host communities and refugees could rise to problematic levels in countries hosting Ukraine refugees unless action is taken. To stop tensions from worsening in places like Poland, Romania and Moldova, we have the following recommendations that come from experts in dealing with arrivals of displaced people in the global south, from our experts responding to the current situation in the neighbouring countries to Ukraine and through a literature review.



1. Improve infrastructure that benefits all communities

Humanitarian interventions, especially in Romania and Moldova, need to meet the needs of host communities as well as refugees. A common thread among refugee hosting contexts that allowed tensions to develop is that the actions of NGOs, CSOs, local, national and international authorities are perceived to unfairly benefit refugees, and host communities get little to no support.

Interventions that improve water, sanitation, health and roads used by both host and refugee communities are



2. Create communication campaigns on co-existence, human rights and education about refugees

It is important to create open communication channels which help address tensions between communities and promote understanding. This should be led by local authorities with support from NGOs, CSOs and the international community, to help host communities understand why refugees are in the situation they're in and promote mutual empathy and co-existence. A communication strategy should be developed and carried out to inform refugees of their rights and the importance of co-existence with the host community.⁴⁸ This will also help combat fake news which is beginning to drive tensions in Romania and Poland.⁴⁹

Because most people are conflicted between feelings of compassion and worries about how hosting refugees impacts them, the concerns of host communities need to be addressed head-on as part of any communication campaign. Overly positive messages that do not address the complexities and difficulties of the context are likely to cause a loss of credibility for the whole campaign.⁵⁰

Communications with host communities should include emotive and value-driven arguments as to why hosting refugees is the morally correct thing to do. Research shows that factual, evidence-based campaigns have little impact on their target audiences. Communication campaigns should not be targeted at people who are already pro-refugee or pro-host community, but at those who are against one community or the other.⁵¹

A World Bank study on social cohesion in refugee hosting contexts in East Africa found that attitudes towards refugees correlate strongly with those of other household members and immediate neighbours. Communication campaigns should be targeted at neighbourhoods. Influential people within neighbourhoods, communities and faith leaders should be specifically targeted as part of a campaign.⁵²



3. Facilitate opportunities for interaction between host and refugee communities

NGOs, CSOs, local authorities, national governments and other actors should actively seek to foster more inter-community interactions through economic or social exchanges, as this has been shown to increase trust and good relations between host and refugee communities over time.⁵³ The best time to facilitate this is now while attitudes are still mostly positive towards refugees.



4. Create child-targeted interventions

A study by Taylor and Glen⁵⁴ found that children who learned about refugees by meeting a (fictional) refugee child who would be joining their school through reading a specially created storybook about refugees expressed more empathy towards refugees when they met them in real life. To foster long-term positive attitudes towards refugees, engaging children is key to changing attitudes around the globe. One good example of how to do this is the recently produced list of [11 tips for talking to children about war and refugees](#) produced by World Vision.⁵⁵



5. Employ staff from host and refugee communities in refugee response projects

Making sure that members of the host community are employed in the humanitarian response to a refugee influx is a good way of building empathy. Employing locals in Uganda and Bangladesh has helped mitigate deteriorating tensions with refugees in those contexts.⁵⁶ The more members of local communities who can find work, learn skills and work directly with refugees, the more they will see real, tangible benefits of hosting refugees, and feel empathy for them. If all the aid workers are from other countries, prices can be driven up for hotels, food and goods, and it does not ensure that there is a locally-led, efficient response to a humanitarian crisis – contravening the principles of localisation as promoted by initiatives like The Grand Bargain.⁵⁷



6. Leverage local markets, goods and services to strengthen economic resilience

Humanitarian cash transfer programming aimed at both vulnerable refugees and hosts strengthens not only the choice and dignity of recipients, but it is also 20% more cost-effective compared to in-kind assistance (aid donated that is not involving money or measured in monetary terms). It supports local markets, as goods and services are locally procured by cash transfer or social assistance recipients, especially if designed with a conflict



Halima and her 4 months old baby collect cereals for their families in Kenya. © 2022 Martin Muluka/ World Vision

sensitive, *Do No Harm* approach.⁵⁸ World Vision has been committed to a cash-first humanitarian response since 2016,⁵⁹ and promotes its use as best practice, as in the Venezuela refugee crisis response in Colombia.⁶⁰

Another tangible benefit to host communities from hosting refugees is for items and services procured for the aid response to be sourced from within the country, when local markets are not functioning. Food packs made up of locally sourced items, as opposed to imported goods, will benefit the local economy, which reduces tensions and builds resilience.



7. Strengthen churches, mosques, faith groups and CSOs

When civil society, churches and faith groups lead responses, tensions lessen between refugee and host communities. Faith groups and churches have a unique role in building understanding, hope and compassion. Faith actors, civil society and local authorities are doing an excellent job in Poland, Moldova and Romania. Instead of replacing local capacity, the UN and multinational NGOs should be coming in to support and fund their efforts and to build capacity. Faith leaders play a vital role in combatting fear, xenophobia, reducing stigma and encouraging social cohesion.

Faith communities can be community leaders in demonstrating compassion to those who suffer, welcoming strangers, reconciling relationships, and promoting dignity, justice, peace and hope.



8. Engage influential figures in host communities

Responses need to involve many actors. NGOs and refugee rights groups may not be the best placed to make arguments, but local and trusted media and civil society groups, political actors, local and national governments, faith leaders, faith-based organisations and faith groups also need to contribute to both communication and aid interventions. If stakeholders are seen as having the best interests of the host communities at heart, this will help contribute to addressing tensions towards refugee communities.

In cases like the refugee camp in Kakuma, Kenya, the governor has been central in driving for acceptance of refugees in the host community. The Kalobeyi Integrated Social and Economic Development strategy was made possible because of this engagement and a similar approach is being adopted in the Dadaab refugee response, also in Kenya.



9. Consider the advantages of remote working and schooling

The COVID-19 pandemic and now the war in Ukraine shows that people who are able to perform their job, or aspects of it, remotely and have the tools to do it, are better prepared for shocks – such as pandemics or becoming refugees. This applies to children in schools as well. If they become suddenly displaced – they are still able to earn and learn – which

Practice example: Avoiding xenophobia by creating cultures of peace for displaced children⁶¹

In the Central African Republic, World Vision ran a project 'Damara Children as Peacebuilders', focusing on children on the move who were affected by the conflict in the Damara sous-prefecture. The programme focused on children formerly associated with armed groups and their families. World Vision partnered with several actors, including the local government, CARITAS and local faith leaders from various churches and mosques.

Religious leaders were trained in child protection, child rights and social cohesion, before carrying out work to improve children's and caregivers' knowledge of social cohesion, tolerance and child protection. The programme also worked with local government agencies to get children into formal education and provided children and community members with access to informal education, vocational training and development of income-generating activities through saving groups.

In total, almost 5,000 children accessed the peace clubs, including 308 children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups. The trained religious leaders also replicated the training they received on child protection, child rights, and social cohesion in their own churches and mosques.



not only means they are less dependent on aid, but less dependent on resources and reduced competition for jobs and places in school, which in turn will lessen the strain between refugee and host communities. It is worth acknowledging that remote schooling is not a suitable replacement for an education, in person and in a school, however the ability to be educated remotely does allow children to continue some form of schooling as their families flee and resettle.

As well as the above, we do have a final recommendation for the international community, NGOs and CSOs beyond the Ukraine response:

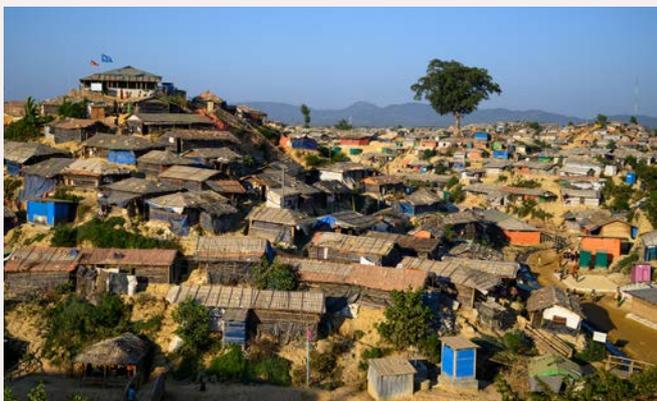


10. Address tensions around services in Lebanon and Bangladesh

While tensions between refugees and host communities may not be at their height in Chile, Uganda, Kenya or even Romania, Poland and Moldova, they are currently at their worst (and deteriorating) in Lebanon and for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

In Lebanon, with the absence of a functioning national government, the international community, NGOs, CSOs and local authorities need to work together to ensure that the needs of Lebanese citizens and Syrian and Palestinian refugees are met. Spiralling tensions need to be halted, cross-community understanding, and empathy increased, and distrust and hostilities reduced.

Bangladesh currently hosts around 927,000 stateless Rohingya refugees, around 620,000 of whom live in the world's largest and most densely populated refugee camp, Kutupalong.⁶² About half of the refugees are children. With unmet humanitarian needs of both refugee and host communities ramping up tensions, more needs to be done immediately to address the growing resentment.



Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh. © 2019 World Vision

THE WORLD HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO NOT LET ANOTHER HUMANITARIAN CRISIS BECOME A REFUGEE CRISIS

There are many valuable learnings governments and humanitarian responders alike in countries hosting large numbers of refugees from Ukraine can take from Lebanon, Chile, Bangladesh, Kenya and Uganda. The distress of sudden displacement should not be compounded by facing negativity from the communities accommodating them. If refugees in places like Poland, like refugees in Uganda, are immediately able to settle, take up employment, access public benefits such as health care and education, and can start their own businesses, then it has significant impact on social cohesion. These enabling factors also need to be facilitated by government policies and humanitarian actors.

The European Union's Temporary Protection Directive makes some steps in the right direction, allowing refugees from Ukraine the right to live, work and access social services in any European Union member state. It is key now that the directive is properly implemented, and that protections are also extended and implemented for refugees in countries that are not member states, such as Moldova.

The international community, NGOs, CSOs, national and local authorities cannot be complacent, assuming that the positive attitudes of host communities towards Ukrainian refugees will last. In every context we have looked at there has been a similar pattern – initial warm welcomes for refugees followed by growing tensions within months or years.

The best-case scenario is that the conflict in Ukraine ends very soon and the majority of the 8.8 million refugees return home. Unfortunately, there is currently no sign that this will be the case. The worst-case scenario is that this displacement crisis, like Syria, the Rohingya, Venezuela, Somalia and South Sudan, is a protracted one. Millions of Ukrainians will be forced to live in Poland, Romania and Moldova for the foreseeable future and, if the current and potential needs and concerns of host communities are not tackled as part of the effort to support the refugees, they too could face hostilities, ranging from prejudice and resentment to exploitation and communal violence.

DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDIES

MOLDOVA: How sustainable is the warm welcome of one of Europe's poorest countries?

At the time of writing, of the more than 523,000 refugees that have crossed the border from Ukraine into the Republic of Moldova over 83,000 have stayed in the country, which represents more than 19.8% and 3.1% of the country's pre-war population respectively (2,640,000 people in 2020, according to the World Bank). Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe, heavily reliant on agriculture.⁶³ Many young Moldovans leave the country to work abroad, and as a result an estimated 15.9% of Moldovan Gross Domestic Product (GDP) comes from remittances.⁶⁴ Much of the population of Moldova lives in a few urban areas,⁶⁵ leaving vast areas of agricultural land with low population density. While not currently a prevalent issue, there is potential for competition around the urban areas for accommodation. There are examples of refugees from Ukraine returning to the country from Moldova with the tensions that are starting to develop from the host community being a factor in the decision.

Jennifer Neelsen, Global Response Lead for Disaster Management for World Vision International, who is deployed to World Vision's response in Moldova says, "Currently many refugees entering Moldova do not stay. An estimated three-quarters transit onto Romania

and then stay or continue again onto other countries. Of those who do stay, it is often because they feel they must because they will return to Ukraine as soon as it is safe to do so. Others stay in Moldova while they figure out a medium- to long-term plan or because they are unable to return due to economic circumstances, disabilities or poor health. However, these latter are comparatively few and are being accessed by aid groups and CSOs."

The situation for refugees in Moldova has the potential to have both positive and negative impacts. They already have a common language and are much more likely to be integrated if they are part of the communities in which they are residing, going to the same churches, with children playing together or going to school.

However, there are already concerns among international community members that the generosity of ordinary Moldovan citizens, many of whom are materially worse off than their guests, is not sustainable.⁶⁶ Inflation in Moldova is incredibly high⁶⁷ and, like a lot of the world, the cost of living has increased dramatically. Fuel has gone up by approximately 130% in the last year, food 60% in the last six months.⁶⁸ Discontent over people's living situations could lead to tensions, especially if it is perceived that refugees are getting more support or getting state resources spent on them.



Elena was a police captain in Ukraine who was on maternity leave at the time of the conflict and is now living in a shelter for displaced people in Stefan Voda, Romania. © 2022 Brett Tarver/ World Vision



Children live with their mother in the Zimbu Football Club in Chisinau, Moldova. The family left Odessa as soon as the bombing started.
© 2022 Brett Tarver/ World Vision

A very small percentage of Ukrainian refugee children have been enrolled in Moldovan schools, often because of uncertainty over the length of their stay, and the availability of continuing their Ukrainian schooling online.⁷⁰ However, if the conflict continues, it is possible that a surge in school enrolments in the autumn may become a flash point for tensions to develop. On the other hand, if children from Ukraine do not enrol in Moldovan schools, that is a potential point of positive integration missed.

In Moldova, World Vision is focused on supporting both host and refugee communities, partnering with the World Food Programme (WFP) to support host families with cash distributions and partnering with a local organisation called *Communitas* to support refugees with food, shelter and essential services, as

well as a children's home that hosts both Moldovan and Ukrainian children.

If tensions become heightened, vulnerable refugees could be at a greater risk of exploitation. The International Organization for Migration has designated Moldova as a country of origin for human trafficking, stating that most of the victims of human trafficking coming from Moldova are sexually exploited.⁷¹

Jennifer adds: "I've worked on refugee responses for the Congolese in South Sudan, South Sudanese in Uganda, Syrians in Iraq and Jordan, IDPs in Chad, and this response in Moldova is one of the most hospitable, generous group of host community members I have ever seen. A lot of the response and engagement is led by churches, faith groups and young activists."



Lisa fled Odesa with her baby boy, her mother and her younger sister. She left her husband and father behind. They are in the Egros Refugee Transit Centre in Iasi, Romania. © 2022 Brianna Piazza/ World Vision

ROMANIA: Refugee numbers rise, as do tensions

Romania has the highest poverty rate in the EU and the lowest relative poverty line of any EU member state of \$5.50 a day.⁷² More than one in 10 of the population in Romania live below the poverty line, although there has been progress. It was over a quarter of the population in 2013.⁷³ Romania is also one of the leading countries within the EU for emigration and its brain drain has negatively impacted development.⁷⁴

At the time of writing, around 786,000 refugees crossed into Romania, either directly from Ukraine or via Moldova, 83,800 have stayed in the country. This is the second highest number of any EU country after Poland since the start of the crisis on February 24. World Vision is seeing that those who are arriving more recently have fewer connections in Europe and are more likely to plan to stay in Romania, in contrast to those who arrived during the first few weeks of the crisis in Ukraine. The first wave of wealthier refugees, followed by more vulnerable ones is common in our understanding of refugee influxes.

Andreea Bujor, World Vision Romania's Director of Communications and Advocacy, says, "All over the country, from the big cities to the small villages near the borders with Ukraine, from the first days of the conflict, many Romanians mobilised to help the Ukrainian refugees due to high emotions invoked by the conflict and the situation facing refugees. People opened their homes to receive refugees, went to borders to greet and help people crossing into Romania, and mobilised community responses which helped them with food, transportation and other necessities."

From the first days of the influx of refugees, voices appeared in public spaces saying that the aid given to Ukraine is exaggerated, that Romania has its own poverty and the mobilisation for Ukraine is one that affects Romanians, championing favouring poor Romanians instead of donating to support Ukrainian refugees.⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ This has been aided by misinformation on social media, which claimed that the conflict in Ukraine is fabricated and money donated is not going to refugees.

There is a very real danger of tensions developing further between host communities in Romania and refugees from Ukraine. We are beginning to see that the attitude of some Romanians towards refugees is changing. While there was initial widespread enthusiasm to help, the level of empathy is now declining and there is growing detachment from the situation.⁷⁷ The conflict in Ukraine has also exacerbated inflation in Romania.⁷⁸ Higher prices are making life harder, especially for Romanians already struggling.

Potential flashpoints could arise from rent being driven up due to the influx of more people with no increase in accommodation supply or a spike in crime that is potentially attributed to refugees from Ukraine. There is also potential for there to be competition for school places and health care services, which could cause relations to deteriorate. If the economic situation worsens, women and children could be particularly at risk of exploitation, such as trafficking, smuggling and illegal adoption.



Bella plays with a staff member at the Romexpo shelter in Bucharest. © 2022 Brianna Piazza/ World Vision

POLAND: Enough resources for the biggest influx of refugees?

Poland has received more refugees across its border from Ukraine than any other country in the world, close to four and a half million at the time of writing. After the Russian Federation, the second highest amount of refugees have registered there – over 1.2 million at the time of writing. The country is set apart from other major refugee hosting nations because it is better off economically. Poland has the 10th highest GDP of all countries in Europe (compared to Romania which is 18th and Moldova which is 43rd).⁷⁹

Ukrainian refugees feel quite welcome in Poland. A government campaign to enrol children in local schools⁸⁰ helped them settle quickly. Polish and Ukrainian languages are similar, which helped refugees integrate well in the communities where they are staying.

Similar to Romania and Moldova, many people in Poland have been very welcoming at an individual level (citizens opening their homes) and community level (churches across Poland and around the border area using their facilities as transit centres). Where we have seen tensions has been the well documented instances of abuse and discrimination towards foreign students, the majority of whom come from Africa and the Middle East.⁸¹

The Polish government's quick implementation of the EU's Temporary Protection Directive facilitates Ukrainians seeking refuge in Poland to immediately access employment, education and social benefits, just the same as any other EU citizen. Those with ties in Poland are largely able to find accommodation and work quickly. Some individuals have even been able to work remotely, continuing virtually with their Ukrainian job in Poland. The Polish Government also has extended a social protection scheme for Polish citizens who host registered refugees – paying the equivalent of US\$9 per day to local hosts.

Like Romania and Moldova, many who cross the border into Poland do not stay in Poland but move on to other locations within the EU-Schengen area. According to the Polish government, as of the end of April, of the near four million refugees who crossed into Poland from Ukraine, over 1.2 million have registered for Temporary Protection allowing them to seek employment in Poland.⁸² A considerable number of people are waiting close to the border in order to cross back into Ukraine as soon as they feel it is safe to do so. Since the conflict



A refugee shelter in Poland. © 2022 Patricio Cuevas-Parra/ World Vision

began, close to 2.4 million people are believed to have crossed back into Ukraine.⁸³

There is already increasing competition in the job market between Ukrainian and Polish citizens, so if this continues or worsens, tensions could develop. Social cohesion could be undermined by the perception of preferential treatment of new arrivals in Poland.

If the conflict in Ukraine deteriorates and western Ukraine becomes a further focus of more attacks or active fighting, then this could result in an even bigger wave of displacement across the border, which could add more pressure on Poland and its economy and drive tensions. Humanitarian agencies are facilitating engagement with Ukrainian business community members, digital workers, start-ups, and joint ventures exploring options for linking humanitarian cash transfers to digital (mobile) savings options and start-up investment support. Mutual socio-economic benefit for both hosts and refugees can strengthen social cohesion and contribute to improved local market and community resilience, but requires intentional strategic investment by government, civil society, business, and other humanitarian response actors.

LEBANON: Politicisation of refugees leads to tensions

Since it started in March 2011, the Syrian conflict has displaced 13.5 million people, over half of them (6.8 million) are refugees. Most of these refugees are in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Lebanon hosts 844,000 registered Syrian refugees, although it claims the real number is 1.5 million, accounting for nearly one-quarter of Lebanon's total population – the highest per capita refugee population in the world.⁸⁴ In addition to Syrian refugees, there are also almost half a million Palestinian refugees living in the country.⁸⁵

Lebanon itself is suffering from social, political and economic crises. It has the highest inflation rate in the world and the Lebanese lira has lost over 90% of its value since October 2019, resulting in three-quarters of Lebanese falling below the poverty line.⁸⁶

Ninety percent of Syrian refugee households currently live below the extreme poverty line, which is defined as less than half the Lebanese minimum wage. Eighty percent of Syrian refugees lack legal residency. Syrians displaced to Lebanon are faced with two registration processes: legal residency which is unaffordable for most and registering with UNHCR as a refugee. Due to this, many Syrians are unable to access basic services or move freely throughout Lebanon putting them at increased risk of exploitation.⁸⁷ A quarter of a million Syrian refugee children are not in full-time education.⁸⁸

Even after 11 years of conflict, less than half of Syrian refugees want to stay in Lebanon. Fewer than 1% say they are considering returning to Syria, and 58% want to go to a third country.⁸⁹ Georges Abi Rizk, World Vision Lebanon's Resilience and Livelihoods specialist notes, "Due to the deteriorating economic situation for both host and refugee communities in Lebanon, tensions are now higher than ever, according to tension monitoring which is applied by the social stability working group. It is likely that tensions will only increase further."

Refugees are weaponised by political actors in Lebanon.⁹⁰ Rami Shamma, World Vision Lebanon's Operations Director notes that "refugees are blamed for many of the country's woes. As per the Internal Security Forces Report, the crime rate has increased recently and this has been, wrongly, blamed on the refugee population by some individuals."

Tensions started to develop around 2014, over two years after the start of the influx. Host community tensions began to grow exponentially when it became clear that the Syrian crisis was not going to end anytime soon, that the refugees would be there for the long-term, and that most of the humanitarian funding coming into Lebanon supports refugees and not Lebanese citizens.

Several social stability and cohesion initiatives were carried out to address the developing tensions. These included infrastructure projects in host communities to better accommodate the increased demand for services, community-based projects to bring together different communities, cash-for-work activities to



Hussein is an 11-year-old boy who lives in Akkar, Lebanon with his family after fleeing Syria six years ago. He spends his days exploring the world of agriculture. © 2021 Maria Bou Chaaya/World Vision



A Syrian refugee in Lebanon with her mother. © 2021 Maria Bou Chaaya/ World Vision

ensure livelihood opportunities were available for host and refugee communities, and local and national level advocacy for more inclusive programmes towards refugees to help ease the tensions. However, the impact has not been substantial, and tensions remain. World Vision has helped address tensions through a wide variety of interventions, such as:



Youth Resolve II, a project from EU Madad,⁹¹ which works on social cohesion between Lebanese and refugee communities through youth committees



Food For Assets projects, with WFP, which include cash-for-work opportunities for Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities



Advocacy participation in national and sector specific working groups



WASH projects that include infrastructure components of rehabilitating water lines, also supported by EU Madad.

Rami recalls, “On a national government level, there was a plan to work on the return of the refugees to Syria, with some pressure made to the international community and locally in the communities. This effort increased social tensions between the refugees and host communities. Some local authorities imposed

curfews on refugees, which further exacerbated tensions. The authorities claimed it reduced the possibility of violent clashes between communities. Some municipalities have, however, welcomed social cohesion projects and the formation of mixed committees of refugees and host community members that have eased tensions.”

Today, most people across Lebanon desperately need humanitarian assistance, but the paralysed political system means that there is no effective way to lobby the government for change.

Rami adds, “An Emergency Response Plan was launched last August by the international community in France, along with fundraising for Lebanese communities. A Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) was done. Both actions resulted in a call from NGOs to consolidate the assessments based on vulnerabilities, and build a holistic response that includes both communities.”

Sadly, tensions in Lebanon between the refugee and host communities, and within different sects of the host communities, are higher than ever. In hindsight, increased transparency in targeting the most vulnerable and providing equal access to resources and services to all in Lebanon rather than just to refugees would have been better in addressing tensions. The lessons to be learned from this context are mostly what *not* to do.

CHILE: A lesson in acting before it's too late

The Venezuelan refugee crisis is Latin America's worst in recent memory, driven by hyperinflation, violence, and food and medicine shortages stemming from years of political turmoil. One out of every three Venezuelans is food-insecure and in need of urgent food supplies.⁹² Once eradicated diseases like cholera and malaria have returned, and children are increasingly dying of causes related to hunger and malnutrition.⁹³ These circumstances led 6.1 million refugees and migrants to leave Venezuela, with large numbers going to Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Chile. An estimated 450,000 are in Chile, although this may be even higher due to large numbers arriving through unauthorised crossing points at the border.⁹⁴

Tensions developed after a year of the crisis. Initially people fleeing Venezuela were seen as taking available spaces especially in jobs associated with services and commerce without causing major conflict. However, tensions began to develop as the number of people living in cities increased, causing overcrowding without adequate basic services and public space for both the refugees and host community.

Paola Avello is World Vision's Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs advisor for the Latin America and Caribbean region. She responds to the exodus of Venezuelans throughout the region and is herself Chilean. She says, "Measures to avoid tensions developing were not taken in time. Some have said that the government in Chile opted for forceful measures which increased xenophobia. The capacity of public services



Self care workshop for migrant children in Chile. © 2021 Fabrizio Guzmán/World Vision

The Hope without Borders Network is an alliance of 1,000 churches in Venezuela, and in Brazil, Colombia and Peru where Venezuelan refugees are moving. This network was created by World Vision. In many communities hosting Venezuelan refugees, state services are disrupted and church communities are filling the gaps to provide essential services and protection from gangs to children on the move and children left behind in their home countries by parents who migrated. Children are encouraged to connect through religious services in their mother language, activities to provide emotional and psychological support, safe spaces to express any kind of violence or abuse, and access to education. Children build confidence because the church network provides them with a safe environment, knowledge about child rights, and hope and a vision for their future. Churches are trained in humanitarian response, WASH, food security, home gardens, and child protection considering the needs in the context. The Hope without Borders Network also works to sensitise the receiving community, reducing the stigma against the children on the move.

was not increased in affected areas, where the population grew from 2,000 to 10,000 people due to the influx. Entire towns were overwhelmed and did not have the resources to care for the incoming wave of people in their communities."

Host communities acted autonomously, and municipalities tried to deal with the situation with local resources and little support. Mass media contributed to the negative perception by highlighting criminal issues where Venezuelans are involved. This led to 60% of Chileans believing that the arrival of migrants is bad for the country and half of Chileans think that undocumented migrants should be expelled from the country.⁹⁵

During the first years of the crisis, people arrived by air. The first wave of people arrived with financial resources and education, and were able to find work, which did not cause tensions. However, the second wave arrived mostly by land, were unskilled or unqualified workers, and had scarce resources. This led to integration becoming more difficult.

Churches, local NGOs and CSOs advocated for greater inclusion at the most critical moments and addressed immediate humanitarian needs, which decreased tensions. However, these solutions are short-term, and more is needed to be done to stop the tensions from developing again.

BANGLADESH: Lessons from the world's largest refugee camp

In August 2017, over 700,000 Rohingya fled violence, persecution and gross human rights violations in northern Rakhine State in Myanmar. The speed and the volume of the crisis created unprecedented protection issues. Today there are almost one million people living in the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The host population of Cox's Bazar face various types of adversity in terms of livelihoods, access to public services, access to education and health care, quality of life, law and order, and environmental issues. The presence of the Rohingya added such strain to the local economy that it has pushed close to 340,000 members of the host community to be classed as "in need of humanitarian assistance."⁹⁶ The influx of refugees has meant that the host community of Ukhiya has become a minority with Rohingya refugees making up approximately 76% of the total population in the region.⁹⁷

There had been waves of displacement of Rohingya from Myanmar for almost a decade, which previously sparked some tensions. But in the months that followed the 2017 exodus, members of the host community began to face difficulties as a perceived result of the refugees which allowed tensions to develop between the refugee and host communities. Prices of essential commodities spiralled, wages for day labour shrunk due to the Rohingya being willing to work for less, land acquisitions, deforesting, poorer health service facilities for the host community comparable to refugees, and a decrease in livelihood opportunities created resentments for the host community. This coincided with the Rohingya receiving more systematised aid services, which reduced the number of face-to-face interactions between refugees and the host community. There was already simmering tensions prior to the mass influx of 2017. This wave of refugees further exacerbated them.

Sumon Francis Gomes is World Vision Bangladesh's Senior Manager for Communications and Advocacy for the Rohingya Crisis Response. He says, "Today, although coordinated aid response has resulted in more stable camp conditions and access to basic needs, hostilities remain due to the protracted and prolonged refugee crisis. While there was initially solidarity from people in Bangladesh towards the refugees, anti-refugee sentiments replaced it, as well as resentment towards humanitarian aid agencies, particularly among the impoverished host communities in Cox's Bazar."



In Rohingya, food is provided to ensure that children in the host community eat well and aren't negatively impacted by the refugee influx. © 2021 World Vision

Following the influx in 2017, the government did take measures to address this, such as creating jobs for the local people through cash-for-work schemes and setting up clinics and hospitals for the host community.

NGOs and CSOs also intervened to meet the needs of host and refugee communities. NGOs built schools for the host community as well as livelihoods, WASH, health and nutrition projects, and distribution of non-food items. World Vision Bangladesh's Rohingya Crisis Response works in the camps with support from the Bangladesh Government and other aid agencies and contributes to improving the lives of host communities and Rohingya refugees through livelihood, health, education, WASH and protection services.

Refugees have had little-to-no input in measures to address tensions. *Majhis* (Rohingya community leaders) have a very powerful role in Rohingya refugee camps with very little democratisation in terms of project implementation. Disputes are resolved by *majhis*, imams and chairs of local council.

Bangladesh is another context which, due to not enough action by actors other than NGOs and CSOs, tensions developed in a context of economic hardship for the host community, at times worsened (or at least perceived to be) by hosting refugees. It supports the notion that an effective response to refugee crises needs to be a multi-actor response.

UGANDA: World's most progressive refugee policy is a model for addressing tensions

Uganda is host to more than 1.5 million refugees, making it the biggest refugee hosting country in sub-Saharan Africa. Most of the refugees in Uganda come from South Sudan, the DRC and Burundi. Uganda has an open-door policy to refugees,⁹⁸ hailed by some to be one of the most progressive in the world.⁹⁹

World Vision Uganda's Refugee Response Director, Mary Njeri, and Team Leader for Food and Cash-Based Project, Paul Mwirichia, agree that Uganda has welcomed refugees for decades, however there have been major recent influxes over the past eight years, which sparked development of new progressive refugee-hosting approaches. And there are tensions between host and refugee communities in some hotspots, but not all within approximately six to 12 months of their arrival. As resources were limited, service provisions were concentrated towards refugees which meant that members of the host community felt left out. In addition to this, trees were cut down for firewood, building houses or to use the land to resettle refugees resulting in a scramble for those scarce resources, which exacerbated tensions.

Tensions peaked during the height of the influx, between 2016-2018, due to the high expectations of the refugees and their lack of awareness of their rights. The refugee situation became politicised by some politicians to influence their constituencies. A Refugee and Host Community Empowerment (ReHOPE) strategy was designed to address the

inclusion of host communities in service provisions in refugee hosting districts.

Through ReHOPE, NGOs and CSOs collaborated more to include local communities in the response. While developing peace building projects, investment was also made in infrastructure benefiting all communities, like education, health and WASH. There was also work to ensure better information sharing. Another effective intervention by NGOs was training up members of the local community to work on the humanitarian response, to develop buy-in from host communities and to ensure staff are trained in *Do No Harm* principles.

There was significant and positive involvement from government and local authorities and political leaders to support peace building, conflict resolution, and providing security to ensure property and lives are protected during moments of conflict. In addition, UN (including UNHCR and World Food Programme) and international donors also channelled funds to support these projects. There was also a process of development and review of policies and sector-specific response plans that addressed emerging issues that reduced tensions between refugee and host communities.

Refugees themselves played a positive role when it came to addressing tensions through a Refugee Welfare Council. Members oversaw dispute resolution and participated in coordination forums where local leaders from the host community were included to ensure mutual understanding developed on emerging issues or they worked on developing joint solutions. World Vision empowered children as peace builders. This was done through promoting peace clubs that integrate refugee and host children.



World Vision Child Protection assistant, Jafari Asibuku reading messages of hope to children. © 2021 Derrick Kyatuka/ World Vision



Nyechan has been working as a food scooper in Kenya since receiving training by World Vision. Her daughter Nyasala is well catered for. © 2022 World Vision

KENYA: Civil society and refugee led-responses can ease tensions

Kenya is one of Africa's biggest refugee hosting countries with 520,000 refugees and asylum seekers coming from Somalia (52.2%), South Sudan (25.7%), DRC (9.2%) and Ethiopia (5.7%).¹⁰⁰ Almost half of the refugees in Kenya (44%) reside in Dadaab refugee camp, 40% in Kakuma refugee camp and 16% in urban areas like Nairobi.¹⁰¹

Somalia and South Sudan are continuing to face deteriorating humanitarian situations due to climate shocks, violence, and political, economic and security instability. Through a voluntary repatriation programme conducted by UNHCR and the governments of Kenya and Somalia, at least 85,000 Somali refugees have returned. However, we are starting to witness some of those who voluntarily returned to Somalia to come back to Kenya – the reason for this is yet to be established.

Tensions began within the first year of hosting refugees. The first flash point for tensions was that the process for where to settle refugees was not sufficiently consultative from the host community's perspective, resulting in the loss of ancestral and grazing lands to host refugees. For example, by 1999, the refugee population in Kakuma was estimated to be more than 100,000. The population of the immediate host community was 90,000. Competition for scarce resources such as water and firewood in an area that receives an annual average of 50mm of rainfall compounded the perceived threat to the host community of being outnumbered. Programming by aid agencies and UN bodies was seen as biased towards the refugees.

Victor Mwanyalo, World Vision Kenya's Food Assistance Project Manager comments, "Some tensions developed in camps like Kakuma, due to having refugees from 14 different source countries. Work had to be done to resolve hostilities between host and refugee communities, and also within the different communities of refugees. Tensions are now significantly less than in the first two decades of the camps."

To address this, NGOs and CSOs pursued a number of initiatives to address tensions, such as a quota system that allowed host communities to access social amenities such education and health facilities, events which promoted cross-community interaction and understanding, initiatives to support refugee safety and security, and farming activities which had a balanced ratio of labourers from host and refugee communities. Also, a recently enacted law gives refugees better access to education and work. World Vision was part of the Humanitarian Partners under the Kakuma Inter-Agency Working Group that drafted, signed and submitted a joint memorandum on reforms to the 2019 Refugee Bill to the Chairman of the Departmental Committee on Administration and National Security of the National Assembly in Kenya. Similarly, as enshrined in KISED (Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan), World Vision targets both host and refugee communities while implementing project activities in Kakuma, e.g., under its Empowering Children as Peace Builders (ECaP) project World Vision worked with 20 schools; nine in the host community and 11 in the refugee community.

The involvement of churches has also helped address tensions. For example, United Host and Refugee Churches is a platform that brings together churches from refugee communities to encourage harmonious living.

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