

Mapping Responses by Cooperatives and SSEOs to Forced Displacement

Courtenay Cabot Venton and
Toscane Clarey

70.8 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide



One third of the global refugee population is hosted by least-developed countries

Less than 3% returned to country of origin

78% of all refugees have been in exile for five consecutive years or more

Cooperatives and other Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations (SSEOs) globally are among the diverse range of enterprises and organization structures effectively responding to forced displacement

Objective of Assessment

To identify **good practices**, capture **lessons learned** and take note of potential areas of **innovation** by cooperatives and other SSEOs working in displacement contexts, with a view to enhancing their role in crisis response and promoting decent work

Types of Cooperatives

Membership Structure

Pathways for
Engagement

Roles

Key Characteristics

Operational Insights

Benefits and Challenges

Enabling Environment



Cooperatives are an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common **economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations** through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise

SSEOs

Distinct sector of the economy that is **people-centred**

Specifically produces goods, services and knowledge while pursuing **economic and social aims** and fostering solidarity

Focuses primarily on **providing services** rather than generating surplus or profit

Cooperatives
Mutual benefit societies
Associations
Community-based organizations
SHGs
Social Enterprises
Foundations



Supporting the Forcibly Displaced Through **Collective Action**

Cooperatives are uniquely
positioned to address the needs of
both displaced persons and host
populations

Role of Cooperatives

Community based, locally owned,
sustainable, needs-based and inclusive

Deliver both **practical services** that allow
economic and human development and
foster **social capacities** and **peacebuilding**

Provide **integrated** and **flexible** response

Goods and Services

Employment

Financing

Knowledge Exchange

Social Capacities

Empowerment

Gender Equality

Peacebuilding

Resilience

Agency



Pathways for Engagement



Host community cooperatives
provide **services to displaced
persons**

Host community cooperatives
recruit **displaced persons as
workers**

Host community cooperatives
include **displaced persons as
members**



Host communities provide **capacity building and training for displaced persons** to set up their own cooperatives

Displaced persons form cooperatives to provide **services for themselves or their host community**



Displaced persons and host communities **organized into cooperatives by an international organization** that then provide services for themselves or the host community

Returning displaced persons **rebuild their own communities** through cooperatives

Structure Matters



A **democratic and participatory** management structure

Local ownership

A strong focus on **cooperative values** including solidarity, working together and meeting member needs

Cooperatives as Development Partners



Democratic nature, collective ownership
and focus on **self-help** leads to a unique
vehicle for empowerment

**Partnering with and contracting them
directly** shows a commitment towards
supporting local organizations



Formal legal recognition

fundamentally effects the ability of cooperatives to replicate, grow and become self-sufficient

Meso Level: Supporting Organizations

Serve as **a bridge** between macro-level legal/policy frameworks and micro-level cooperative governance structures and values

Enabling Environment: International Agencies

Listen to local demand and find ways to support the goals and needs expressed to ensure cooperatives scale organically



Cooperatives are highly contextual, responding to myriad different needs in different ways, and **programming should reflect this**

Local cooperative federations provide advice, governance and management support for refugee-related cooperatives and can be a key entry point for engagement



Next Steps

Build a Community of Practice



Workshops



Knowledge platform for sharing of
resources



Adapting relevant tools, capacity
building and training services



Raise Awareness



Policy briefs, case studies, articles
and other media placements on the
role of cooperatives in displacement

Invest in Research



Self Help Groups and social enterprises in displacement contexts



Cooperatives and internal displacement



Economics of refugee cooperatives



Cooperatives and women's empowerment and gender equality in context of displacement

Thank You

