

# Refugee livelihoods in protracted displacement

Research programme 2015-2017

## Background

There is increasing recognition that programming in the context of responding to protracted displacement – and in responding to protracted crises in general – cannot be credible or effective unless it incorporates and reflects the perspectives of refugees.

Yet efforts over many years to engage with recipients of assistance in more participatory ways have not succeeded in ensuring that assistance is planned and implemented in ways that accord with the lives and priorities of people affected by crisis. While forced displacement is increasingly urban and protracted, humanitarian agencies have faced challenges adapting their procedures and mechanisms to work effectively in non-camp settings, and problems confronting refugees still tend to be addressed as short-term rather than long-term ‘developmental’ issues.

Building on previous HPG work on displacement, livelihoods and vulnerability, this project will explore, from the perspective of refugees, their institutional landscapes, networks, and livelihood strategies. It will consider different priorities of refugees over the course of protracted displacement and offer recommendations for supporting the strategies they use to meet them, including new ways of interaction between refugees and formal and informal networks, agencies, and institutions.

In order to do this, the project will consider the following questions:

- What are the different priorities of refugees in the course of protracted displacement, and what strategies do they use to meet them? How do these aims and strategies change during displacement?
- What opportunities are there to support refugees through a richer understanding of their perspectives, and the roles and perspectives of the people, networks and institutions that are important in shaping their lives in displacement?

The project will start with a literature review of policies, paradigms and practices in assistance to refugee populations in protracted displacement. Fieldwork will be conducted in three countries (TBC): refugees from Myanmar in Malaysia; refugees from Syria in Turkey; and refugees from the Central African Republic in Cameroon. Fieldwork conducted in the case study countries will recreate with refugees their ‘displacement life history’ to understand how their aims, strategies and actions – and their wellbeing – have changed during their displacement.

It will study the networks and institutions refugees have engaged with, and the factors that shape this interaction and its outcomes. Roundtables will be organised in case study countries to bring together refugees, networks and institutions supporting refugees, and humanitarian agencies to discuss the findings of this research and explore better ways to support refugee livelihoods and wellbeing.

## About the Humanitarian Policy Group

HPG is the humanitarian focused research team within the Overseas Development Institute, an independent think-tank based in London. HPG is one of the world's leading research centres dedicated to improving humanitarian policy and practice in response to conflict, instability and disasters through a combination of original research, high-quality analysis, dialogue and debate.