Humanitarian Action
CONCEPT NOTE

June 3rd, 17:00-18:30

Synopsis

This session focuses on the range of recent experiences where identity systems have proven to be effective for dealing with human crisis, or long-term problems with humanitarian dimensions—such as refugees, statelessness, natural disasters. It also addresses the challenges of identity management encountered in the context of humanitarian action.

The session is brought to you in collaboration with UNHCR

Background

The World is witnessing the highest recorded levels of refugee displacement at a time where solutions to this humanitarian problem have become increasingly elusive. This cycle results in growing numbers of refugees in situations of protracted displacement.

For refugees, prompt enrollment in a quality registration system can be life-saving. This crucial process facilitates the provision of humanitarian assistance, including the identification of special needs or vulnerabilities and family groups. Registration and a recognized identity are the foundation for the protection of vulnerable displaced persons and can facilitate durable solutions such as resettlement and return. States and humanitarian agencies increasingly use digital ecosystems to deliver humanitarian assistance, including "cash-based interventions (CBI)" which are replacing traditional forms of "in kind" assistance.

The role of technology and innovation, informed by better data and analysis on displacement and the extensive experience of the humanitarian sector, may also offer new pathways by which refugees can access greater opportunities. According to a study by the WBG and UNHCR undertaken in the Kakuma refugee camp in North-Western Kenya, once refugees have proof of ID, they can participate in socio-economic inclusion programs in their host societies. They would be able to engage as consumers, employees, and business owners in ways that can boost the local economy and enable greater self-reliance opportunities for all.

Providing recognized proof of their identity allows access to financial services (such as opening a mobile money account). Other opportunities could include taking university or other courses online for which they can be awarded recognized qualifications that can be kept securely and digitally, to be used when needed.

As States, the private sector and humanitarian agencies increasingly use digital ecosystems to facilitate access to services, and consequently refugees must have a widely recognized digital identity to facilitate digital inclusion. This could avoid the risk that they are further left behind and unable to access the benefits of the digital economy; from online work to trade across borders.

Holding a trusted ID provides refugees with the proof of who they are – something they may have never had previously or may have lost as a result of displacement. This can also contribute to preventing statelessness, by establishing or retaining links to countries of origin included in the context of displaced people returning home.

The situation of host communities, also often located in fragile and conflict affected areas is increasingly a focus for considering on how to bridge the humanitarian and development divide. Addressing the "identity gap" for all groups living in fragile and conflict zones offers opportunities for more permanent and sustainable responses.

Key areas for discussion
The session is expected to cover the different roles identification plays across all phases of humanitarian interventions, from emergency response all the way to long term displacements.

1. ID in the emergency response phase:
How are approaches changing to registration of refugees and internally displaced persons in emergency contexts? What are the optimal or possible role of States and humanitarian organizations? What are the challenges that can arise and how can they be best resolved (data protection, interoperability humanitarian systems/State ID systems)? What more is required on standards and preparedness?

2. ID and the transition from the emergency response phase:
What is required for digital ID for refugees to facilitate increased self-reliance and greater financial and socio-economic inclusion for refugees and forcibly displaced persons? How can host States integrate refugees within their digital ID ecosystems whilst ensuring that they are appropriately protected? What are the best approaches to interoperability and data protection? How can refugees and host communities be most effectively included in CRVS systems?

3. ID and protracted situations of displacements and facilitating access to durable solutions:
What are the mechanisms to ensure that displaced persons have a digital identity that unlocks access to formal and private services such as opening a bank account, registering a SIM card, owning a business or other assets, enrolling in school, applying for formal sector jobs and loans? What role does the refugee ID have in facilitating durable solutions such as resettlement and return?

4. Cross-cutting issues:
How are issues relating to refugee confidentiality and data protection best respected across the spectrum of displacement? How does the development of thinking on interoperable national ID systems and regional or national trust frameworks affect refugees? Has the development of thinking on "levels of assurance" considered the situation of refugees appropriately?

What enrollment models should be used for foundational IDs in fragile and conflict affected areas? How can the ID and CRVS needs of host communities also be addressed? If refugees are not included in foundational ID systems what steps can be taken to avoid digital exclusion?

How can gender, age and diversity be considered in thinking about ID in humanitarian contexts? How can registration and ID enable achieving the realization of the SDGs and help to monitor impact?

How can the role of the State and humanitarian organizations on registration and ID best be balanced?

How can displaced persons be provided with greater control of their personal data? What is the role of the private sector as both an ID "consumer" and, potentially, a digital ID "provider"?