Forced Displacement and Development
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Context

More than 60 million people around the world are forcibly displaced; the highest number recorded since World War II (OCHA et al., 2015, p. 2). The causes are manifold, reaching from armed conflicts and persecution to human rights abuses, disasters or the continuing fragility of certain states. The on-going war in Syria already led to more than 4.8 million registered refugees (UNHCR, 2016) and an estimated 7.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) (UNHCR, 2015). Although proximity should not define responsibility, it is the neighbouring countries that are most affected by the Syria crisis with Turkey hosting 2.7 million registered Syrian refugees, Lebanon 1 million and Jordan 600,000 (UNHCR, 2016). Forced displacement is however not an isolated phenomenon but a global challenge, with displacement affecting all world regions, be it in the Horn of Africa or the Bay of Bengal, in Central America or the Hindukush. In addition, an increasing amount of people is displaced by natural disasters. With more than 184 million people concerned between 2008 and 2014, it is now generally understood that extreme weather events “may become the norm rather than the exception” (Burkhalter in The Nansen Initiative, 2015, p. 2).

Situations of forced displacement have traditionally been addressed from a humanitarian perspective. However, many of the crises become protracted and return rates are at a historic low (OCHA et al., 2015, p.5). It is now estimated that the average length of displacement amounts to 17 years, equalling more than the full educational cycle for a child, for example (OCHA et al., 2015, p. 6). Furthermore, Syrian refugees living in Jordan and Lebanon for example are comparatively young (81 per cent are under 35 years old) with a share of 20 per cent children between zero and four years old (Verme et al., 2016, p. xv). Over half of all forcibly displaced now live in urban areas, challenging the traditional encampment policies and forcing actors to rethink their approaches. They are often concerned with unemployment or low-paid work and may remain “without access to education, sufficient health care and secure housing” (World Humanitarian Summit, 2016, p. 1). People living in refugee camps may receive the necessary humanitarian assistance to survive but often lack any opportunity for self-reliance. (World Humanitarian Summit, 2016, p. 1). Situations of protracted displacement not only severely impact individuals and families, but entire host communities and countries (World Humanitarian Summit, 2016, p. 1).

Thus, more long-term solutions are needed, empowering displaced persons “to live with dignity while contributing to, and benefiting, their local community” (OCHA et al., 2015, p. 15). The authors of a Roundtable on Solutions (2014) policy brief underline that “current
models have yielded little progress toward satisfactory interim or durable solutions to the increasingly protracted displacement of refugees and IDPs” (p. 1). Understandably, a new approach requires the involvement and combined contribution of both the humanitarian as well as the development side. Or, as expressed in a study by OCHA et al. (2015), “a better development-humanitarian framework can help mitigate some of the consequences [of protracted displacement] and make long-term recovery easier to achieve” (p. 4).

Addressing forced displacement

The “need to build coherence between traditional humanitarian and development responses” has long been recognised by the international community and has recently received revived attention (OCHA et al., 2015, p. 6). Specific development-related questions with wider political implications need to be considered “beyond regular humanitarian assessments” (OCHA et al., 2015, p. 8). Integrated responses building on joint analyses, multi-year planning as well as the common formulation of strategic, clear, quantifiable and measurable goals and outcomes is thereby crucial. Furthermore, a multi-stakeholder approach – including governments, international organisations, civil society, trade unions, academia, media, migrant organisations and the private sector – along a revised and adapted finance architecture is crucial.

When addressing protracted displacement it is crucial to address the following three operational areas:

Prevention: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies, alongside the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as well as the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change provide a compelling framework to address several of the multiple root causes of forced displacement. States should acknowledge this new global regime as an instrument to address various root causes, such as armed conflicts, climate change and the continuing fragility of certain states. Building on what Alexander Betts (2013) calls “survival migration” we have to expand the scope further and consider also migrants forced to move in addition to the above mentioned root causes also food insecurity. Hence the argument can be made that also other SDGs, such as SDG 1 or SDG 10 are to be considered as preventive measures of forced displacement.

Protection: The centrality of the 1951 Refugee Convention and notably the principles of the right to seek asylum, international cooperation and responsibility sharing as well as non-refoulement should be reiterated as it is the irreplaceable starting point for any new global compact on protecting displaced persons. Further, the protection of the rights of IDPs as stated in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and formalised in the Kampala Convention (African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally
Displaced Persons in Africa) is more important than ever considering that about 40 million people are currently displaced within their own country (IDMC, 2015). However, all migrants in vulnerable situations need to be included in protection mechanisms. With the protection agenda resulting from the Nansen Initiative for example, we now dispose of a framework aiming to protect people displaced by climate change and extreme weather events, who are not included in the 1951 Refugee Convention. An additional challenge when it comes to ensuring adequate protection for displaced persons is to have instruments capable of reaching them also in urban areas. This requires inter alia more localised protection mechanisms and an active cooperation with local authorities. It is equally important to acknowledge that protecting displaced persons is not limited to humanitarian protection but spans across all human rights and all situations.

**Self-reliance:** A cornerstone in the principle of self-reliance of displaced persons is the recognition of their skills, talents and ambitions as well as the right to work and the accessibility of jobs. SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth provides us with a compelling base for addressing these various challenges. In addition, the local as well as the global private sector should be encouraged to support and implement policies aiming to include displaced populations into local labour markets without generating a sense of exclusion of the local labour force. For the displaced children, access to quality primary and secondary education is crucial and, following the principle of “leaving no one behind”, is covered by SDG 4 on quality education. Further, self-reliance can be promoted through financial inclusion, such as access to bank accounts, savings instruments and remittance-sending facilities. Achieving self-reliance for displaced persons is fundamental: it restores their dignity, it reduces aid-dependency and it enables them to contribute to sustainable economic growth.

If addressed in appropriate ways and including measures in the areas of prevention, protection and self-reliance, embedded in adequate system responses, we can reduce the number of displaced persons, protect their human rights, avoid protracted situations, and help displaced persons regaining hope for a better future in safety and dignity for them and their children.

*This paper does not make any claim to completeness but is instead intended to provide an overview of the issue of protracted forced displacement and to stimulate discussion on the issue of forced displacement and development. The discussion on the above areas as well as the consideration of concrete examples will shed light on recommendations and future linkages to be made.*
List of References


World Humanitarian Summit (2016). *Leave no one behind: A commitment to address forced displacement*. Retrieved April 25, 2016 from High-level leaders' roundtable: https://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/73b4e8be2378f6dd16d8bf0f940383a7a8f7900d?vid=575817&disposition=inline&op=view