

à propos

The KOFF
Peacebuilding
Magazine



Peace-Migration Nexus: Dilemmas & Opportunities

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editorial

According to the World Migration Report (IOM, 2020), there were about 272 million migrants globally last year, representing only 3,5% of the world's population. Despite this low ratio and the fact that 26% of these migrants were forced to leave their countries, anti-migration in government policies, narratives and public discourse is still common.

As the number of people on the move is estimated to grow, notably for demographic and environmental reasons, seizing the opportunities that migration brings for peace seems relevant and necessary. To this end, some efforts have been made by the international community since 2018. By adopting the two global compacts on refugees and migration, 152 UN Member States intended to strengthen their cooperation and commitment to ease national responses, uplift migrants' conditions and human rights in host and home countries. However, not all states approved them and their non-legally binding nature undermines their implementation.

In view of the remaining challenges, KOFF has launched a Joint Learning Process on Peacebuilding and Migration (JLPM), enabling its member organizations to explore the opportunities and challenges that migration brings to peace. Together, they seek solutions to promote a systematic and strategic inclusion of migration in peacebuilding policy and programming and advocate for a more nuanced and constructive narrative on migration.

In anticipation of its findings and recommendations, this edition of à propos offers a first overview of KOFF and other organizations' perspectives on the migration-peace nexus, its opportunities and challenges in the current context. While some have recently seen migrants' aspirations for peace deteriorate due to the COVID-19 crisis or xenophobia, others have seen them empowered through capacity building, access to the labor market or inclusion in the society with the help of social cohesion programs.

Wishing you a pleasant read,

Sanjally Jobarteh, Editor of KOFF magazine

focus

Migrants in Mexico – the invisible victims of the pandemic



Casa del Migrante Saltillo in the state of Coahuila, Mexico, provides safe housing for migrants on their way to the USA, 2015, Peace Brigades International

The coronavirus crisis is presenting Mexico with major challenges in relation to health and migration. In both those areas, human rights defenders are helping to find solutions. But to do so, they need public recognition, protection and resources.

COVID-19 is hitting Mexico hard. By early June 2020, the Johns Hopkins University was talking about over 93,000 people being infected and more than 10,000 having died. In the middle of March, the Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador declared a national emergency; all non-systemically important sectors were closed down and freedom of movement was restricted in many places. Since May 18, however, some restrictions have already been lifted again in areas where few people are infected, despite growing numbers of cases in the country as a whole.

In the meantime, violence in Mexico recognizes no quarantine precautions. Between January and March 2020, over 8,500 murders were committed, 13.5% more than in the same period last year. Furthermore, between March 15 and the end of April, the Mexican government recorded 44 attacks on human rights defenders and four murders.

Coronavirus pandemic exacerbates asylum-seekers' situation

The current measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 are having serious consequences for men, women and children seeking asylum, most of whom come from Central America and are stuck in Mexico on their way to the USA. The authorities emptied state-run migration centers as much as was required to comply with social distancing and hygiene regulations, or else closed them down altogether. In several of the over 60 state-run migration centers, migrants have protested about the lack of protective equipment and demanded to be sent back to their countries of origin. In some cases, the National Guard reacted to these protests with undue force.

Most of the migrants who could no longer find a place in the state-run centers were sent back to their home countries. However, Central American countries temporarily closed their borders so that people are now stuck on their way home. This problem, and the fact that some people had become infected with the virus in Mexico, was barely taken into account when the state-run migration centers were cleared.

Nor can the numerous migrant hostels run by churches and NGOs take in any more people, because of hygiene regulations and an increasing pressure because they receive no support from the state. Even more migrants than before are forced to live on the streets, where they are subject to violence from criminal gangs, arrest, discrimination and an increased health risk from COVID-19.

This situation is affecting huge numbers of people in Mexico. Every year, hundreds of thousands of migrants with no documents travel through the country in order to enter the USA. Under the US "Remain in Mexico" migration policy, asylum-seekers have no longer been permitted to enter the USA since January 2019, and await the outcome of their application there. Even though the US judiciary has not yet decided whether this policy is legal, it has allowed it to be implemented during the coronavirus pandemic. By the middle of May 2020, over 60,000 people had been sent back to Mexico and more than 1,000 assaults such as murder, torture, rape and kidnapping had been reported among the asylum-seekers and migrants who were waiting there.

Human rights defenders as bridge-builders

The situation for migrants and asylum-seekers is grave: they are stranded in Mexico, where even the local population has no reliable information about the health situation in the country. Violence rules the streets and general uncertainty about the future is widespread. As the lawyer Ana Lilia Amezcua Ferrer writes, what is needed now are transparent

measures to build society's confidence. Human rights defenders are important players, because they act independently of governments and therefore can build bridges between the state, the population and the migrants. This will help to protect the migrants and reduce the potential for conflict and violence.

Peace Brigades International (PBI) supports the migrants' hostel "Casa del Migrante Saltillo", in Mexico's northern state of Coahuila. This non-state-run accommodation offers migrants humanitarian aid on their passage through the country, as well as psychological and legal support. PBI supports hostel employees who are at risk in their work by accompanying and protecting them without the use of violence. During COVID-19, this has mainly taken the form of regular phone contact, information campaigns and networking at national and international level, and advocacy work with the Mexican and international authorities.

Especially during the coronavirus crisis, the situation of the migrants demands more public attention and international support. At the same time, the situation puts pressure on the Mexican state to fulfil its commitment to guarantee the wellbeing of migrants. For their part, human rights defenders need to be recognized, protected and financially assisted by the state so that they can support the thousands of migrants in Mexico.

Helping migrants in Mexico means reaching an enormous number of people, because the effects of the migration and asylum policies can be felt throughout the region. In this time of crisis, providing humanitarian aid and defending the rights of migrants are essential to keeping the peace in Mexico.

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[links](#)

- [Peace Brigades International Switzerland](#)
- [Being a migrant in Mexico during a global pandemic](#)

reports

Displaced populations in Uganda: challenges and

realities for peace



Amanjara Women Support Group mentorship session in Adjumani (Uganda), Refugee Law Project

Uganda, home to 42.7 million people (as of 2018), 1.4 million of whom are refugees (as of May 30, 2020), has moved considerable steps to deal with the movements triggered by the fragile geopolitics within the Great Lakes region. Uganda continues to open up and is a growing hub of economic activity considering the relative peace compared to some of its neighbors. A peek into the Compendium of Conflicts in Uganda by Refugee Law Project (2015) shows that a significant part of the Ugandan population have been forced migrants themselves.

Host communities in Uganda are impacted by hosting forced migrants from the region, a dynamic that further exacerbates already complex socio-economic realities, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Consequences of hosting displaced people on the local labor market have been considerably discussed in academic and political circles. On the one hand, forced displacement can alleviate sectoral labor shortage, especially when migrants possess skills which are valuable and complementary to the ones of the host population. Equally, the entry of forced migrants in the labor market may result in increased competition for less available job opportunities, leading to a decline in population welfare.

Yet another key aspect to consider is the availability of resources and infrastructure. In rural Uganda, an average citizen owns a modest plot of land from where food, water, firewood and thatch are sourced. Whereas forced migrants are likely to cause demand pressure on local supplies, they potentially attract investments undertaken by international agencies in public services. A study by Kreibaum (2016) points out that additional schools funded by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) not only significantly relieved pressure on the Uganda Government to cope with increased demand of educational services but have also improved access to education in and around refugee hosting

districts.

Noteworthy is also that hosting forced migrants is an enabler to a more diverse and inclusive society. In Uganda, host populations generously lend some of their lands to government to settle forced migrants. Such support has gone a long way in strengthening peaceful co-existence between refugees and host communities. However, this is just one example of relative peace and does not reflect the complex situation just yet, as both communities are dealing with unaddressed legacies of conflicts and/or disasters that shoved them into Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps or in refugee settlements outside their country of origin. Indeed, it is essential to bear in mind that an influx of displaced populations may cause a feeling of insecurity in the host community. News and research reports have shown several episodes of clashes and xenophobic attacks mainly resulting from perception of unequal treatment in service provision. To realize sustainable peaceful coexistence, these realities should not be ignored in research, policy formulation and direct service provision.

In conclusion, working towards sustainable peace in both displaced person and their host communities demands intentional and inclusive policy matrices that consider the unique needs of forced migrants and their hosts. This approach needs of course to be girded by the bedrock of functional governance structures in order to be effective.

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- [Eirene Suisse](#)
- [Refugee Law Project](#)
- [Compendium of Conflicts in Uganda by Refugee Law Project \(2015\)](#)
- ["Their suffering, our burden? How Congolese refugees affect the Ugandan population," Kreibaum, 2016](#)

reports

Fostering alternatives to migration in El Salvador



sandra Ramirez (in the middle), visiting a project in Chalatenango, El Salvador, March 2019

This is an Interview with Sandra Ramirez, National Coordinator, Terre des hommes Switzerland

à propos: How is the NGO Terre des hommes involved in migration-related projects in El Salvador?

Sandra Ramirez: For more than 40 years, El Salvador has been affected by the departure of migrants who mainly travel to the United States through Guatemala and Mexico, fleeing poverty or violence. Youth unemployment reaches 13.6% in the country and the northern, mountainous region of Chalatenango is greatly affected. This area was particularly devastated by the civil war and is still suffering the economic consequences. At Terre des hommes, we support a local NGO called CORDES (Fundación para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Comunal de El Salvador), which is carrying out a project to increase opportunities for young people in Chalatenango. This organization identifies income-generating activities in the region and provides young job seekers with the adapted vocational trainings to increase their entrepreneurial skills. Despite the lack of job opportunities, we are convinced that these youngsters can have a future in Chalatenango. The climate and land are suitable for farming and there is a pool of agricultural knowledge among the local population. Besides, CORDES accompanies these young people with a psychosocial approach to help them reach their goals while maintaining their self-esteem and strengthening their participation in community development.

à propos: Don't you think that migration can contribute to peace in your country? For example, when Salvadorans increase their opportunities to earn income in the United States and later invest in El Salvador to open a business?

SR: While respecting the right to free movement, I don't think that migration is a good option. Rather than leading to peace, I think it has more negative consequences than benefits for our country.

First of all, few are those who come back to El Salvador, as it is linked to social stigmatization and the notion of failure. Instead, they encourage their loved ones to migrate as well, notably by spreading an attractive image of their new lives, which does not always reflect reality.

Furthermore, migration fuels human trafficking, which is a huge problem. Some migrants encounter the same level of violence as in El Salvador or even worse along their way. Many people disappear and their families are left without information. As far as their economic situation is concerned, there is often no improvement either, as some live in very precarious conditions in camps in Mexico or the United States. Not everyone succeeds in the United States and in this case, debts incurred with family members to finance the journey are not reimbursed, resulting in a loss of domestic capital.

Another significant threat to peace is family disintegration. It is very common that men leave without their wives and children. In worst cases, both parents leave and children are left with no education or financial support. They are then more likely to join gangs or become vulnerable to recruitment by criminal groups who pose themselves as new family. Hence, it becomes a vicious circle. By wanting to escape violence, you rather feed it.

à propos: What do you think of the agreement that was signed in September 2019 between the US and El Salvador consisting of sending asylum seekers back to El Salvador?

SR: I think that people should be free to move wherever they want to. This agreement is very problematic because many asylum seekers from El Salvador, Honduras or Guatemala are now stuck in Mexico, unable to cross the border. They stay in very precarious conditions, sometimes in camps, risking becoming victims of violence or prostitution.

We have to protect people from being forced into such situations by addressing the root causes of poverty and violence. Programs such as the one of CORDES can contribute to raise hope and self-esteem of the disadvantaged youth. We have witnessed some success stories of young people who, thanks to training and micro-enterprises, have been able to generate income and become completely independent from their families. They are proof of the existing opportunities in Chalatenango and a model for future generations.

[Interview of](#)

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[links](#)

- [TDH projects related to migration](#)
- [TDH's support for returnees in El Salvador](#)
- [CORDES – Asociación Fundación para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Comunal de El Salvador](#)

reports

Strengthening refugees' capacity as agents for peace - challenges and opportunities



"De-Escalating conflicts" qualification course with the Berghof foundation in Zaatari Camp, 2018, Dagmar Nolden

"At first, I was shy, and I thought that violence has no solution and peace don't exist.

[...] After some time, I began to accept the ideas and techniques we learned [in the training] and started to use them on my own.

I then discovered how useful they are and how much impact they had on me and on others.

They made me relax and feel at ease.

Therefore, I started to use them at work and at home. [...]

I concluded that the training is very useful for my surrounding and me,

and that peace and violence are in all of us,

and every human being gets to choose to either

spread peace or violence.

I choose spreading peace by applying what I learned in the future.”

Participant, Berghof Foundation Qualification Course “Building Peace from the Inside Out”, Azraq Camp, 2018

The common portrayal of refugees as passive receivers of aid or even as burden undermines not only their confidence and self-effectiveness, but seriously limits their capacities to contribute to constructive social change and global peacebuilding. Both, the desk study “Peace-Migration Nexus” of swisspeace and KOFF’s Joint Learning Process on Peacebuilding & Migration corroborate, that refugees, IDP’s and migrants have not only skills critical to peacebuilding but can indeed act as agents of change and have a positive influence on peace processes under the right conditions.

The quote above shows that *under the right conditions*, such as context- and target-group-specific qualification formats, refugees can act as agents of constructive social change. Furthermore, it highlights the potential of peace education as key to valuable contributions to peacebuilding as well as the fact that the time in exile can represent a great opportunity for the refugees to empower themselves.

Working with refugees in Jordanian Camps, we were not only able to witness how seldom the refugees’ wisdom and experiences were seriously taken into consideration, but rather how their creative and constructive engagement was systematically undermined. In contrast, we gained insights on possible developments in a conducive environment.

We, therefore, argue that it is about time to start a discourse, if not a dialogue, in which people, although they are entitled to receive services, retain their agency. The exchange and joined development of peace narratives could constitute an interesting starting point for such a dialogue.

From our work with Syrian refugees in Jordan and underpinned by theoretical background research, we distilled the following chances and challenges:

1. Encourage agency as you enter in a direct dialogue with participants/refugees. Address and treat them as full individuals, capable of making their own decisions and show that you take their needs serious as you involve them in joint decision-making processes.
2. Dedicate time, space and resources while using dialogue-oriented, participatory

approaches, to work actively on trusting relationships, foster cooperation and collaboration among participants and to create a safe and supportive learning environment. Extend this collaborative approach towards partners on all levels, including donors.

3. Address direct and indirect violence in a context-, conflict- and trauma-sensitive manner. This also includes discussion on structural violence, which however, create strong dilemmas working in violent structures.

In sum, combining classical peace education methods with modules on interactive theatre, stress relief and resilience, and personal development emphasises social and emotional learning.

However, availability of funding and short funding cycles constitute, a limiting factor from a practitioners' perspective. They make long-term engagement, which is particularly relevant in protracted refugee situations, as well as large-scale outreach to the target group challenging. The multiple restrictions by e.g. host governments supervising learning content or strictly monitoring camp access constitute an additional limit for peace education programming in refugee camps. Close cooperation with local partners is thus crucial.

Lastly, the structures of refugee reception, if not the whole refugee governance regime being often characterised by direct, cultural, and especially structural violence pose a big challenge to the impact, sustainability and credibility of peace education programs in refugee camp settings. Overcoming those limitations and challenges will require further research as well as joint efforts by the international community, host governments and practitioners in the field.

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[links](#)

- [the Berghof Foundation's programme "Civic and Nonviolent Education in Jordan implemented from 2011 -2019 in the Jordanian refugee camps Azraq and Zaatari](#)
 - [For an elaborate version, see: "Refugees as agents for peace. Reflecting on the implementation of peace education formats in Jordanian refugee camps. 2019.](#)
 - [KOFF Joint Learning Process on Peacebuilding & Migration \(JLPM\)](#)
 - [swisspeace desk study "Migration-Peace nexus"](#)
-

Confronting the impact of anti-migration sentiments in Colombia



"We don't want to live in fear," mural in a Colombian village, Nadine Siegle

Migration has existed all throughout human history. While it has sparked solidarity among many grassroots, activist and civil society groups, social rejection, racism and anti-migration sentiments in host societies are common, too. In Colombia, the latter have gained visibility in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In a series of interviews, we discussed the dominant narratives and images regarding migration in Colombia, and immigration from Venezuela in particular.

Over the past decades, the armed conflict in Colombia has been the primary reason for people to leave the country. Many of them sought refuge with their neighbors in Venezuela. In recent years, however, we have observed a reversal of the situation. Colombia has become the main destination for Venezuelans trying to escape the deteriorating living conditions at home. Today, Colombia finds itself not only in the midst of a transition to end the long-lasting armed conflict and build peace, but also faces a new migratory phenomenon.

The majority of Venezuelans in Colombia live from the informal economy, as they come undocumented and without resources. Selling sweets in the streets, performing at a traffic light or cleaning car windscreens is often a full-time job to pay rent and food. Due to the curfew imposed to fight COVID-19, these people were not able to go out and make a living

as usual, nor receive financial emergency assistance from the government, as this is granted only to formal employees. Losing the possibility to sustain themselves, the only option was returning to Venezuela, often walking on foot.

In times of COVID-19, however, any type of movement on the streets is perceived as a risk of contagion and spread of the disease. Out of this fear, more and more publications are appearing on different social media networks, blaming Venezuelans for taking away jobs, driving down wages and increasing criminality in urban areas. Those false rumors often contribute to weaken solidarity and helpfulness towards individuals and groups in vulnerable situations, and Venezuelans are not the only ones. Colombia is still one of the most unequal countries in the Americas and has the highest rate of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide. There are some measures to support different population groups in Colombia, but it has become a sensitive topic. Administrative obstacles are high and laws mostly exist on paper.

The Colombian government, with the support of the international community, has the chance to turn the page. Socioeconomic measures to address the needs of everyone living in Colombia, as well as programs and policies to counter hate speech, racism and anti-migration sentiments can contribute to overcoming the social fragmentation in the Colombian society, which is the result of decades of violence and armed conflict. Otherwise, COVID-19 might contribute to deepening the social divide and the profound inequalities in Colombia, thereby hindering the transformation of longstanding patterns of inequality, injustice and violence into just and durable peace in the country.

Do you want to hear more about the topic? Check out the new episode of the KOFF Ton-Träger! It brings together different voices to discuss about the narratives on migration from Venezuela and the links to conflict and peace in Colombia.

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[links](#)

- [swisspeace](#)
- [New episode of the KOFF Ton-Träger about the narratives on migration from Venezuela and the links to conflict and peace in Colombia](#)

reports

Syrian diaspora mobilization for peace



Douma, eastern Damascus suburb of Ghouta, Syria, June 23, 2016, Bassam Khabieh

The initially peaceful movement that took place in Syria in 2011 escalated into a full-scale conflict. This caused many Syrians at home and abroad to reclaim their sense of national belonging and generated collective action with the aim to, first, play a part in the social and political transformations inside Syria and second, to respond to pressing needs of Syrian people both inside and outside the homeland. Many countries in Europe and the Middle East witnessed the emergence and strengthening of a vibrant and politically engaged civil society led by Syrians to address pressing demands on the ground. Maastricht University has been commissioned to conduct a research study by the Danish Refugee Council's Civil Society Engagement Unit (CSEU) to investigate the conditions that influence the space and actions of Syrian civil society organizations in Lebanon, Turkey, France, Germany, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

The research made use of an action-based approach, in which future scenarios and potential strategies for action have been elaborated collaboratively in a participatory manner. Next to serving as a tool to generate knowledge, the aim was to provide a space for the development of future scenarios and joint strategies for action for the Syrian civil society in the respective host countries. The study yielded a range of practical considerations relevant to stakeholders who seek to engage with Syrian diaspora actors.

Democratizing decision-making processes at the international level.

A future political settlement in Syria should be Syrian-led with decision-making roles in all aspects of recovery and reconstruction, including peacebuilding initiatives, return and

reintegration. A top-down agreement faces the risk of breaking down due to lack of nuanced understanding of the Syrian context, whereas local and grassroots ownership in peacebuilding can render it successful and durable. A greater representation of the Syrian diaspora in international decision-making processes should be selected in a transparent and democratic manner. The selection mechanisms should facilitate representation of different political (independent) voices and allow space for bottom-up politics. This requires acknowledgement of multiple lines of fragmentation and internal divisions that exist within the diaspora.

Safe space for dialogue – dealing with fragmentation in a constructive manner

The conflict dynamics inside Syria were also reproduced in the diaspora, as arising fragmentations to a certain degree mirrored the social, cultural and political divisions present in the homeland. A conflict- and context-sensitive approach in engaging with diaspora groups requires an awareness of the potential risks and limitations as well as of the socio-political dynamics present in the process of diaspora mobilization. Stakeholders should not search for a unified voice and representation among Syrian diaspora actors but rather create a space for discussion and debates, in which diversity (instead of uniformity) leads to future ways of cooperation, action and positive social change.

The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, together with GIZ, supported the publication of the study, in the framework of DRC's work on diaspora. There is a strong link between violent conflict, peace and migration. While it is obvious that fragility and armed conflicts invariably trigger involuntary migration movements, the fact that migration-related challenges also go on to influence the conflict dynamics and therefore the conflict transformation dynamics is still an underexplored area. The study contributes to improving our understanding of these dynamics through the lens of the crisis in Syria.

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links

- [Maastricht University](#)
- [The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs](#)
- [German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH](#)
- [Danish Refugee Council](#)
- [Entire report from the University of Maastricht: Diaspora Mobilization in Contexts of Political Uncertainties](#)

Helvetas' experience with the conflict – migration nexus



Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, April 2019, Helvetas

Men and women flee from conflict and violence as well as from poverty. According to the ILO (2018), inequality and conflict have been among the main drivers for the increase in international migration over the last couple of years. Academic literature indicates that violence and insecurity induced by criminal actors are as much a driver as war and terror. Both are equally complex to address through development and humanitarian work. Leaving one's homeland can be a coping strategy and a response to violence and conflict. At the same time, mobility can affect social cohesion. Displaced people – mostly due to armed conflicts, generalized violence, or sudden and slow onset disasters – often depend on assistance without having perspectives in their temporary location. This frequently changes existing social, economic, and power balances. In addition, men and women are often affected by violence when they are on the road and their experiences – being smuggled or trafficked by non-state armed groups or criminal networks or being subjected to extortion, forced labor, sexual exploitation or slavery-like practices – are just as violent as the situations they have fled from in their countries. Helvetas' development or humanitarian projects address the various interrelations of migration and conflict in many forms.

For example, by fostering access to vital services and increasing economic opportunities, Helvetas indirectly addresses many drivers of migration. Furthermore, Helvetas has been successful in mitigating tensions by engaging in community-based peacebuilding and social cohesion. However, it is difficult to measure the extent to which these interventions

broaden the choices people have regarding staying or leaving.

Ethiopia is Africa's first refugee host nation, hosting over of 1.5 million displaced people, including refugees of 20 different nationalities (mostly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan). The situation is deemed as unique due to the open-door policy of the Ethiopian Government towards migrants, which leads to the possibility of discussing durable solutions, allowing refugees and IDPs some agency and participation in reconciliation efforts (see ODI policy brief). Oftentimes, peaceful coexistence is facilitated by shared ethnicity and language such as in the case with Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. Implementing the open door policy, however, remains challenging as IDPs tend to be underserved in all crucial areas of public service, which undermines their trust in the host country's government and hampers their participation and contribution to a new reality (see OCHA's report). Hence, issues like participation and institutional representation for migrants and refugees remain one of the most contested issues for durable solutions. This is why Helvetas supports refugees/irregular migrants' connection to the market and employment opportunities. Helvetas' experience and recent studies underline the need for extensive consultations and inclusive programs to establish a link between refugees and host communities (see also 2018, Institute for Security Studies), as social cohesion is a key success factor for such programs. This is also outlined in the Bangladesh example below.

In Bangladesh, the Rohingya refugees were initially warmly welcomed by the equally Muslim, indigenous and themselves minority communities in Cox Bazaar. Recently, however, challenges for social cohesion have grown substantially and COVID-19 has fueled further tensions. Frustration from the host community's decreasing livelihood opportunities, unofficial participation of Rohingyas in the local economy, an average wage decreasing of up to 50% and inflation, have led to tensions between refugees and host communities. Helvetas is striving to address these tensions and create linkages between host communities and refugees. Especially relevant for Helvetas' projects are the less visible social, political and economic dynamics within and between social/identity groups such as sub-groups and internal divisions within the camps as well as among the host communities. Strengthening social cohesion and participatory processes between host communities, refugee communities and local authorities is much needed but not always straightforward nor easy to finance. Additional tasks of liaising between the humanitarian community, the camps and local governments to coordinate the provision of services, the distribution of available resources at community level, identifying common needs, work on common solutions, and solve minor disputes between them are highly challenging. Oftentimes, all actors, including local authorities, are neither prepared for this role, nor do they have the resources. Support for such measures, however, would contribute to enhancing social cohesion, reduce conflicts and establish platforms for dialogue between host communities, local authorities and Rohingya refugees. Unfortunately, such projects are still rarely implemented the way they should and often remain pilots with uncertain follow-up finances.

Taking the conflict-migration nexus with all its aspects and controversies seriously is a multifaceted task in situations that are subject to rapid changes. With the prospect of increased global mobility, the distribution of scarce resources and services and attached governance systems as well as increasingly polarized and identity-based political discourses, it seems important to think about the multiple interlinkages between migration, violence as well as identity (politics) in development work.

Helvetas

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links

- [ILO report current state of labour migration and the key characteristics of migrant workers in the world today](#)
- [European Commission study: The role of conflict and organized violence in international forced migration](#)
- [ODI Policy brief: "Achieving durable solutions by including displacement-affected communities in peacebuilding"](#)
- [OCHA report: "Breaking the Impasse: Reducing Protracted Internal Displacement as a Collective Outcome"](#)
- [Institute for Security Studies' policy brief: "Promises and challenges of Ethiopia's refugee policy reform"](#)

in depth

Displacement crisis: new paradigm and struggle for behavioral change



Dagahaley camp, Kenya, September 2019, MSF

The increasing number of displaced people worldwide has led the international community to rethink its approach to displacement and migration. It is in this spirit that the New York Declaration, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) have come to life between 2016 and 2018, under the auspices of the UN member states (MS), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration.

The GRC's core objectives are to ease pressure on the host countries, to enhance refugees' and displaced people's self-reliance and inclusion, to expand access to third-country solutions, to support conditions in countries of origin for a safe and dignified return and to protect displaced people's rights.

This new approach is supposed to reverse the way the international community responds to displacement, aligned with the "nexus concept" that has emerged from the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, promoting stronger complementarity between humanitarian, development and peace efforts and a "whole-of-society approach".

However, the non-binding nature of such instruments along with the challenges of today's multilateralism and geopolitical realities make the implementation of commitments particularly difficult.

How, in such environment, to mobilize MS to translate this paradigm into concrete facts?

The overall strategy (in particular that of UNHCR) has been to create a momentum within the community of MS that would encourage and promote collective behavior change mainly by:

1. Highlighting countries considered exemplary in their approach to displacement

- (e.g. Ethiopia, Uganda, Costa Rica, etc.);
2. Bringing forward influential member states (e.g. Germany) and international organizations (such as IGAD) that can champion such paradigm;
 3. Involving key financial and development institutions, such as the World Bank, and large private companies, which can promote the economic and financial benefits of such an approach;
 4. Encouraging MS' self-commitments in open forums (e.g. the Global Refugee Forum).

Such strategy aims to create a new “social and behavioral norm” in the MS community about their approach to the displacement crisis, one that draws from a constructivist reading of international relations. To foster such change and ensure its sustainability, a tipping point must be reached, both in the number of states and profile of states promoting and implementing such approach. This would then allow for a “socialization process” that could lead the majority of states to follow such paradigm.

Specific dynamics in East Africa have borne hopes to trigger such behavioral change. Countries such as Ethiopia and Uganda and international organizations such as IGAD and the World Bank are championing the GCR in the region and encouraging others such as Kenya (especially in Kakuma camp) or Zambia to follow similar paths. However, two main elements act as major obstacles in developing further this new social norm worldwide:

1. The lack of credibility (and willingness) of influential states with regards to their own approach to displacement: Most European MS, the US, Russia, China and some BRIC countries barely implement such approaches in their own countries, which impacts their legitimacy in the eyes of others and limits the traction needed to trigger collective behavioral change.
2. The struggle to counter MS' respective security and political agendas, in a global aggressive and protectionist environment against refugees and migrants. While a clear connection with development gains has been made, a coherent narrative to tackle security and political concerns of MS is still missing. Displaced people are often used as a “card” to be played as part of a broader political game. This makes situations like in Dadaab camp in Kenya or in Europe (to only name a few) extremely difficult to be resolved.

Unfortunately, while the COVID-19 pandemic is turning into a “human and societal crisis” the road towards a new paradigm with regards to displacement seems even further away, as some MS have taken the opportunity of public health measures to further restrict refugees and migrants' rights.

As mentioned by Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees before the UN Security Council on the 18th of June 2020: *“These trends somehow show how, when leadership fails, when multilateralism – which you represent – doesn’t live up to its promise, the consequences are felt not in the global capitals of our world; not in the homes of the powerful and of the rich. They are felt in the peripheries of nations, in border communities, among the urban poor, in the lives of those that have no power.”*

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

Raphael Gorgeu

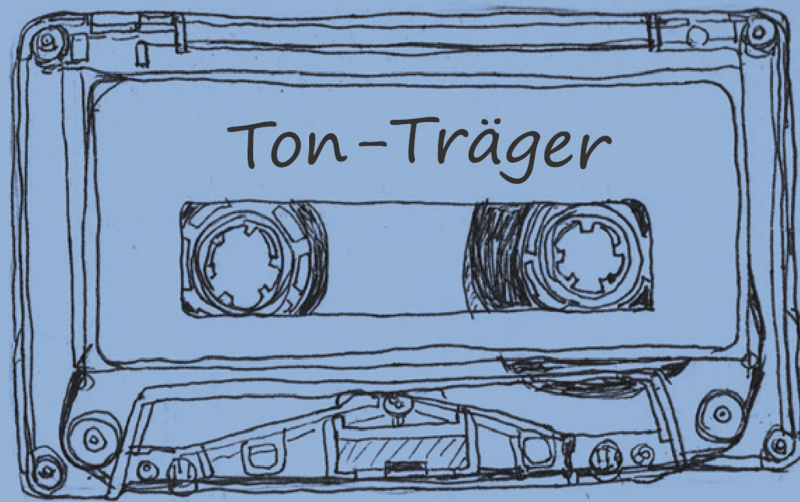
Deputy Director of Operations

links

- [The New York Declaration](#)
- [UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees](#)
- [UN Global Compact on Migration](#)
- [UNHCR Global Refugee Forum](#)
- ["International Norm Dynamics and Political Change" by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 1998](#)
- [Amnesty International public statement "Refugees and migrants forgotten un COVID-19 crisis response"](#)

news

The third episode of the KOFF Ton-Träger is now released!



Like this edition of the à propos, the third episode of the Podcast published by KOFF will take a closer look at the connection between peace and migration. Within this topic, we will talk about anti-migration narratives and its connection to a durable peace.

With the deterioration of living conditions in Venezuela about six years ago, many people, who had once found a stable living in the country, had to look for alternatives. The closest one was the neighbouring country Colombia. Since then, many people have crossed the border legally as well as illegally. While Colombia finds itself in the midst of a transition to end the long lasting armed conflict and build peace, it now faces a new migratory phenomenon. On the one hand, many individuals and civil society groups show solidarity, but on the other hand, social rejection and anti-migration sentiments can be found. The current pandemic was yet another event increasing tensions around this phenomenon and placing them in the centre of public debates.

Different voices from Venezuela, Colombia and Switzerland shed light on the current situation in Colombia and analyze the impact that migration narratives, may they be negative or positive, can have on a durable peace. The podcast is facilitated by Hannah-Milena Elias and can now be found on Soundcloud.

links

- [KOFF Podcast Ton-Träger](#)

news

swisspeace launches a new online course



The virtual course “Strategic Dialogues in Peace Processes” provides an in-depth training for peace practitioners facilitating and supporting strategic dialogues. The participants will learn how to assess the use of dialogue in complex peace processes by gaining a thorough understanding of the opportunities, challenges and requirements of a strategic approach towards dialogue.

Date: 02 – 10 November 2020

Application deadline: 31 August 2020

[links](#)

- [swisspeace postgraduate courses](#)

calendar

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KOFF NEWS

Upcoming events organised by KOFF and its member organizations can be found on our [KOFF NEWS WEBPAGE](#).

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KOFF

Die Schweizer Plattform für Friedensförderung
La plateforme suisse de promotion de la paix
La piattaforma svizzera per la promozione della pace
The Swiss platform for peacebuilding

KOFF is a dialogue and exchange platform facilitated by swisspeace. It is jointly supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the following Swiss NGOs which are members of the platform:

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Baha'i	Lucerne Initiative for Peace and	Stiftung für Integrale
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