

# Desk Study: Peace-Migration Nexus

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## swisspeace

swisspeace is an action oriented peace research institute with headquarters in Bern, Switzerland. It aims to prevent the outbreak of violent conflicts and to enable sustainable conflict transformation.

## About this study

This desk study analyses the nexus between peace and migration by providing an overview of the literature and debates on the topic, and drawing on examples from research and practice. The aim is to contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between conflict-induced migration and peacebuilding, in three phases of migration: before flight, during flight and transit, and after return. On the one hand, the study looks at the implications of conflict-induced migration for peace and stability in fragile and conflict affected countries of origin and transit. On the other hand, the study reveals challenges and opportunities of conflict-induced migration for peacebuilding. Rather than offering an in-depth analysis or concrete recommendations, this study outlines issues specific to conflict-induced migration and relevant to peacebuilding, and points to areas in need of further research and action.

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## Abstract

This desk study provides an overview of the limited literature and debates on the interdependencies between violent conflict, migration and peace, as well as the resulting implications for peacebuilding. Thereby, it contributes to a better understanding of the potentials and limitations of conflict-induced migration for peacebuilding. Despite an increasing awareness for long-term consequences of migration, international and national (im) migration policies and measures tend to focus on short-term results, or 'fixing the problem'. The resulting pre-dominant perception in politics, media and society is that migration is temporary and undesired. The study shows that the lack of a view for the longer term is problematic and has implications for local, regional and international peace and stability. Thus, there is a need to deepen the understanding of the links between peacebuilding and conflict-induced migration, in order to prevent violent conflicts and ensure peace and stability. With its holistic and conflict-sensitive lens, peacebuilding adds a valuable dimension to migration research and practice and contributes towards comprehensive approaches in migration governance. However, the study finds that conflict-induced migration and its nexus with peace and peacebuilding remains underexplored.

An enhanced understanding of the nexus between peace and migration and a subsequent well-adapted and effective implementation of peacebuilding instruments in all phases of forced migration increases the profile of peacebuilding. An in-depth knowledge of causes, drivers and dynamics of migration, in particular conflict-induced migration, as well as processes of migration governance add value to peacebuilding by enhancing the understanding of the links between conflict, peace and migration. The latter is relevant to inform peacebuilding tools and methods. Particularly with regard to conflict prevention and the involvement of returning refugees, IDPs and migrants in peace and dealing with the past processes, peacebuilding offers many potentials and, therefore, is essential to migration governance.

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## List of abbreviations

IDP	Internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Crimes

# Introduction

## 1.1 The peace-migration nexus

People have always migrated. However, in the past two decades the volume of forced migrants, the variety of drivers and the range of destinations have expanded (Zetter 2014). Unequal access to wealth and opportunities, environmental degradation, persecution, violations of human rights, state fragility, armed conflict and generalized violence are some of the factors that push people to leave their homes. As the numbers of displaced people rise, perceptions of (forced) migration as a threat to societal and state security dominate the public and political discourse in many regions of the world, in particular in the Global North (Castles 2003; Walters 2010). This emphasis on state and societal security has negative effects for the safety and rights of IDP's, refugees and migrants, and at the same time, fails to reduce the numbers of people forced to migrate (Castles 2003; Inter-Agency Regional Analysts Network 2016; Amnesty International 2017). In addition, securitized policies tend to create a narrow perspective on a highly complex phenomenon. Walters (2010) argues that the securitization of migration marginalizes the space in which one could begin to imagine a different politics of migration. Consequently, there is a demand for new perspectives. In this context, scholars, practitioners and policy makers have considered the nexus between migration and development (Carling & Talleraas 2016; SDC Global Programme Migration and Development 2017; mdplatform.ch n.d.; World Bank 2017), and to a lesser extent, the interrelationships between peacebuilding and migration (Hayes et al. 2016; swisspeace 2017).

The majority of migrants, refugees and IDP's in the world flee from (and within) developing, fragile, conflict or post-conflict contexts to countries in similar conditions (e.g. Syria, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Somalia, Iraq, DRC). The protracted nature of many contemporary conflicts and the resulting uncertainty, insecurity and instability, as well as the inability or unwillingness to find permanent solutions for displaced persons outside their country of origin, have led to prolonged displacement experiences (Strutynski 2014; Horst & Grabska 2015; Krause 2016). This in turn can hinder the transformation of the underlying violent conflicts and potentially contribute to the emergence of new conflicts. Further, the psychological and physical impact of flight and migration affects different groups of refugees and migrants in different ways, according to age, gender, personality, socio-economic status, and nature of migration (Birchall n.d.). These realities call for differentiated state and non-state responses to forced migration. Thus, a re-thinking of current migration policy and practice is needed to find sustainable solutions for both protracted displacement situations and the related violent conflicts (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014; Hayes et al. 2016).

The lack of a conceptual analysis of the interdependencies between conflict, migration and peace, is evident in the structures and frameworks of migration governance as well as in the design of peace processes. For instance, refugee protection in host and transit countries is rarely linked to conflict transformation and peacebuilding measures in conflict-affected countries of origin (Krause 2016). In order to deal with the complexity of migration in fragile, conflict and post-conflict situations in a comprehensive way, it is relevant for state and non-state actors to understand the interdependencies between migration and peacebuilding. Thus, Hayes et al. (2016) argue for an 'all hands on deck' approach in migration governance, which includes global and local perspectives from development cooperation and peacebuilding. With its focus on mid- and long-term processes and the goal of creating conditions for peaceful transformation of conflicts and ensuring development at all levels of society, arguably peacebuilding offers adequate tools for understanding migration-specific challenges in fragile, conflict and post-conflict contexts (swisspeace 2017; BICC 2018; SIPRI 2018; PRIO n.d.).

## 1.2 The scope of the study

Migration as defined by the IOM (2018) includes the movement of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification. *Regular* migration is defined as a voluntary movement of people seeking better economic and social opportunities, or different lifestyles. More than three percent of the world's population are regular migrants. In contrast, *irregular* or *forced* migration, involuntary by nature, is a smaller but highly significant international migratory movement (Zetter 2014).<sup>1</sup> So-called regular migrants and forced migrants (asylum seekers and refugees) receive different treatment under international law, based on their different reasons for moving. People who are deemed to have a well-founded fear of being persecuted fall within the specific terms of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the following 1967 Protocol (henceforth 1951 Refugee Convention) and are labelled refugees. Yet, today, refugee and migratory movements increasingly intersect (UNHCR 2018). The result are so-called mixed migration movements, driven by multiple factors and generally of irregular nature (IOM n.d.). Given the complexity and multiplicity of drivers of migration, in this study *forced migration* includes a wider category of people who are forced to leave their homes due to threats to their safety and livelihoods (Zetter 2014).

This study looks at the interrelationships between forced migration and peacebuilding measures in fragile and conflict-affected areas. In this context, the focus is on *conflict-induced* migration, typically caused by humans (Migration Data Portal 2018), including “people who are forced to flee their homes for one or more of the following reasons and where the state authorities are unable or unwilling to protect them: armed conflict including civil war; generalized violence; and persecution on the grounds of nationality, race, religion, political opinion or social group” (FMO 2012).

For the purpose of this study we will use the term *refugee* to cover people seeking refuge in a country other than their own, including asylum seekers, persons covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention and other forced migrants, *IDP* to cover internally displaced persons, and *migrant* to cover people migrating for other reasons than those mentioned in the FMO definition of conflict-induced migration, including economic ones. We speak of displaced persons when referring to any form of irregular or forced migration (within and across borders) that includes an element of coercion or force at any given stage of the migratory journey (Zetter 2014). This will allow us to talk about migration and related issues in a straightforward way.

Finally, this study adopts an approach based on the concept of sustaining peace, which was introduced in two substantively identical resolutions issued by the UN Security Council and the General Assembly in 2016 (A/RES/70/262; S/RES/2282). Sustaining peace is understood as an overarching goal of peacebuilding processes aimed at building “[...] a common vision of society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account” (A/RES/70/262).<sup>2</sup> It is a practice-oriented comprehensive concept to preventing violent conflict by addressing drivers of conflict, patterns of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and underlying root causes of conflict, including different kinds of exclusion, systemic discrimination and marginalization, based on joint analysis of conflict dynamics and joined-up strategic planning. As such, it constitutes a broadening of the largely outcome driven peacebuilding approaches rooted in the liberal peace agenda and focused on building state capacity, restoring state authorities, and transitioning to democracy through elections. Ultimately, its goal is to “[...] nurture a society's resilient capacities to address conflict in a constructive manner” (Mahmoud & Makoond

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<sup>1</sup> According to the most recent UN DESA report (2017) on international migration, there are now 258 million people living in a country other than their country of birth. Of this number, approximately 10% are refugees or asylum seekers (UN DESA 2017). In recent years, conflict-induced migration in particular has forced millions to leave their homes (Hayes et al. 2016). According to the UNHCR Global Trends on Forced Displacement in 2016, 65.6 million people were forcibly displaced at the end of that year. Out of this number, 22.5 million were refugees, 40.3 internally displaced people and 2.8 million asylum seekers (UNHCR 2016).

<sup>2</sup> See S/RES/2282: [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_res\\_2282.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2282.pdf) ; A/RES/70/262: [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_70\\_262.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_262.pdf)

2018). In this study, we will use the term *peacebuilding* to refer to any processes and measures contributing towards this overarching goal, including strategies aimed at peacefully transforming violent conflicts such as conflict prevention and conflict transformation.

### 1.3 The objectives and aims of the study

The objective of this desk study is to provide an overview of existing relevant literature on the peace-migration nexus and current debates among key stakeholders. The study looks at the interplay of conflict-induced migration and peacebuilding in three phases of migration (before migration, during transit, after return). The following research questions are at the heart of this report,

- 1) How does conflict-induced migration impact on peace and peacebuilding processes in countries of origin and transit?
- 2) How does peacebuilding affect conflict-induced migration in countries of origin and transit?

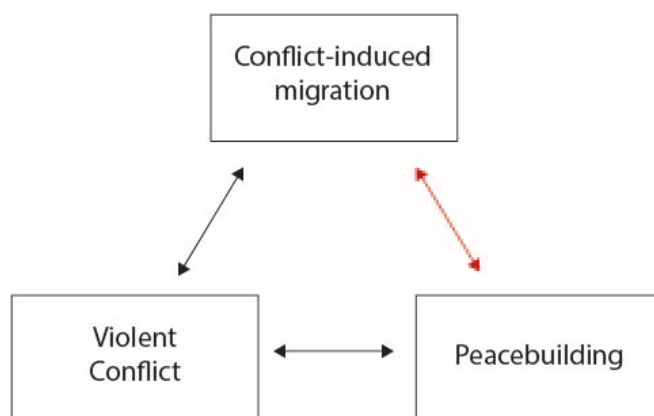


Figure 1: Interplay of conflict-induced migration with peacebuilding (own source)

The answers to these questions should provide a better understanding of the interdependencies between conflict, migration and peacebuilding processes in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The study concludes by identifying gaps in research and pointing to challenges and opportunities for policy-makers and practitioners working at the nexus between peace and migration.

## 2 The peace-migration nexus in flight, transit and return

This chapter looks into three phases of migration, namely before flight, during transit and the return phase. In each phase, it looks at the literature and debates addressing the interdependencies between conflict, migration and peacebuilding in order to understand better the impact of conflict-induced migration on peacebuilding in countries of origin and transit as well as how peacebuilding impacts on migration movements. Each section highlights issues relevant from a sustaining peace perspective.



## 2.1 [Before flight](#)

What drives people to leave their homes and what role can peacebuilding play in this decision? This section looks at the phase leading up to individual or group decisions to migrate or flee, and in particular the role of peacebuilding in this period. It addresses the notion of root causes and root cause approaches and provides insight into existing literature on root causes and drivers of conflict-induced migration in an attempt to identify entry-points and challenges for peacebuilding.

### 2.1.1 [Root causes and drivers of conflict-induced migration](#)

The notion of *root causes* stems from debates on how to address factors and forces that generate migration. Carling and Talleraas define root causes as “conditions of states, communities, and individuals that underlie a desire for change, which, in turn, produces migration aspirations” (2016: 6).

Several studies have contributed to a better understanding of causes and drivers of conflict-induced migration. Zetter (2014) points out that most often it is a combination of factors that lead to forced migration. For instance, Hayes et al. (2016) list violence, war, environmental degradation, deprivation, fear, identity politics and economic security as drivers of conflict-induced migration.

In a case study on the causes of displacement in Somalia, the author finds that in all instances of major displacement from 1988 to today there were high levels of violence involved (Hammond 2014). However, besides violence, she identifies a range of additional drivers of migration, such as the economic effects of the conflict, droughts, political exclusion of minorities and the political instrumentalization of displacement by conflict parties. Hammond (2014) points to the importance of recognizing that conflict affects people with different backgrounds in different ways. For example, members of Somali minority clans were even more disadvantaged in the conflict because they often lacked a political voice and did not benefit from any protection of their interests through armed militias. Further, people who relied traditionally on agriculture were particularly hard-hit by the effects of both the conflict and drought. Thus, on the one hand, the study finds multiple drivers for displacement, even though generalized violence is always present in the phases of mass displacement. On the other hand, the study proves the differential impact of a conflict on different groups of people. Finally, all these factors play a role in shaping the emergence and composition of the refugee population (i.e. the numbers of so-called Somali minority clan members are disproportionately reflected in refugee populations in neighbouring countries).

Adding to the literature on conflict-induced migration and the understanding of how violence affects migration, Bohra-Mishra & Massey (2011) conduct a study on how armed violence influenced the likelihood of local, internal and international migration during a civil conflict period in south-central Nepal. The study finds that only under conditions of extreme violence did people begin to perceive threats to their safety to exceed risks of travelling. In other words, as long as risks of moving outweigh those associated with staying home, people are more likely to stay.

Here, it is important to note that gender-related factors can define who has the opportunity, ability and resources to migrate. In an attempt to explain under which conditions people decide to leave, Carling (2002) introduces the concepts of aspiration and ability, as well as the term ‘involuntary immobility’. Latter is described as “the aspiration to migrate but the inability to do so”. In the proposed model, migration aspiration is defined as “a conviction that migration is preferable to non-migration; it can vary in degree and in the balance between choice and coercion” (Carling & Schewel 2018: 946). Carling (2002) analyses the (in)ability to migrate at two levels. On a macro-level, he looks at restrictive immigration policies, and the resulting available modes of migration, associated requirements, costs and risks. On a micro-level, the author refers to “[...] individual level characteristics, which differentiate between people in their ability to overcome the barriers to migration [...] such as gender, age, family migration history and social status [...] (Carling 2002: 13). Gender relations, hierarchies, status and roles in the family and society, as well as structural characteristics of the country of origin, determine women’s and men’s access to information and

resources, thus influencing their motivation (or aspiration) and ability to migrate. In other words, “Gender is deeply embedded in determining who moves, how those moves take place [...]” (Boyd & Grieco 2003). Yet, (forced) migration can also provide new opportunities, in particular for women to improve their lives by shifting gendered roles and responsibilities to their benefit (Jolly & Reeves 2005).

In an attempt to find newer approaches to migration theory, Carling and Talleraas propose a model, which allows to identify root causes and the following chain of mechanisms that produce migration and which can help to “understand the observable outcomes and assess the scope for policy influence” (Carling & Talleraas 2016: 6). The authors suggest that conditions (or root causes), in combination with prospects, lead to a desire for change. The desire for change in turn results in an aspiration to migrate. The study suggests that even in the case of forced migration, people have to consider their options before coming to the decision that, given the circumstances, flight is the best strategy for survival. According to the authors, the desire for change is a positive force. As such, it can be channelled towards different responses. Depending on the relative appeal and feasibility of the alternatives, people might direct their desire for change towards migration or, alternatively, to pursuing local opportunities. Yet, if migration is too restricted, it can create situations of involuntary immobility. The latter creates a situation that has negative impacts on the individual, community and national level, as people who desire to leave, but cannot, are less likely to invest in local resources and more likely to be frustrated. If migration is not an option for marginalized youth for example, joining a vigilante group might be an alternative response. In other words, responses to a desire for change can be constructive (e.g. pursuing education, entrepreneurship or political activism) or destructive (e.g. radicalization). Accordingly, policies directed at the early stages in the chain of migration causes could pave the way for constructive and preventive responses (Carling & Talleraas 2016; Carling 2017). The potential and limitations of peacebuilding efforts in creating such alternative responses, and its impact on the prevention of conflict and conflict-induced migration, are at the heart of the peace and migration nexus in the phase before migration.

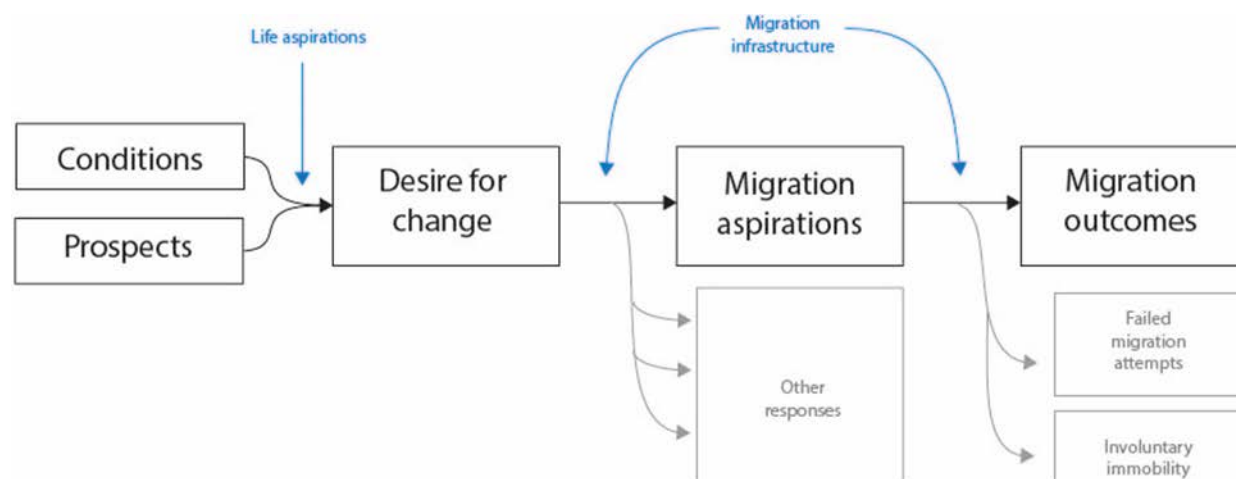


Figure 2: The mechanisms that produce migration. Source: Carling and Talleraas, 2016

### 2.1.2 [Peacebuilding and conflict prevention as root cause approaches](#)

Root cause *approaches* refer to measures that aim to reduce migration by dealing with driving factors in the countries of origin, such as violence, human rights violations or poverty. Root cause approaches also include measures to limit economic migration through development (Castles & Van Hear 2011). In the 1980s, the international community began recognizing the need to address poverty and human rights in migration governance. It has since pursued and implemented strategies of addressing root causes of

migration through poverty alleviation, and humanitarian action, including conflict prevention and peacebuilding (Carling & Talleraas 2016). Since, several studies have addressed the limitations and possibilities of root cause approaches.

Critics of root cause approaches argue that an emphasis on root causes creates the perception that migration can and must be stopped. Also from an international economic perspective, Castles & Van Hear (2011) argue that pursuing a root cause approach alone has proven to be somewhat intractable as the root causes of migration lie in global inequalities, and addressing these requires major transformation in distribution of resources and power. Thus, the strategy has not reached its intended goal of preventing or reducing migration. Recent research has even shown that poverty alleviation through socio-economic development in poor countries initially increases rather than reduces migration, as it increases people's ability to turn migration aspirations into reality (Martin & Taylor 2001; Castles & Van Hear 2011; Carling & Talleraas 2016). However, Martin & Taylor (2001) also demonstrate that further reducing the wage and job gap could deter emigration in low-income countries. In other words, the question is not whether economic development reduces emigration or not, but how much economic development is needed to reduce emigration.

Carling argues that it is misleading to consider poverty as a root cause of migration and that armed conflict, repression and societal breakdown are more likely to cause migration (Carling 2017). However, poverty, poor governance and the violation of human rights are risk drivers that can exacerbate conflict and lead to generalised violence. The resulting conditions make it difficult or impossible to sustain safety and livelihoods, forcing people to move. Thus, Zetter (2014) and Hayes et al. (2016) highlight the need to address structural and conflict-related causes of migration. Accordingly, peacebuilding and conflict prevention interventions that address push factors must have a long-term perspective and be embedded in local networks in order to enhance social connections and strengthen existing capacities.

In an article titled 'Conflict is Key to Understanding Migration', Guéhenno (2016) states the need to address major conflicts as they are the principal drivers of displacement: "Policymakers must do more to de-escalate the international and regional geopolitical rivalries that feed off wars, do better at conflict prevention, and pay more attention to the political, economic, and development failures and grievances that turn into violence." In this context, Schmeidl (n.d.) suggests developing "[...] early warning models that track the factors that can lead to forced displacement, with the aim of focusing on early preventive efforts that would then avoid the need for migration in the first place, balancing human and state security alike".

Organizations such as the German Consortium Civil Peace Service (*Ziviler Friedensdienst* ZFD) are examples of track II efforts to reducing the probability of flight by engaging in violence prevention. In Afghanistan, one of its member organizations focuses on empowering young adults to acquire the skills and confidence to be change makers in their own societies. In South Sudan, one of the Civil Peace Service Programs aims at strengthening the efforts of people who are committed to peace and have the ability to envision a peaceful future. Both initiatives aim to strengthen resilience in order to prevent the emergence of violence, which can lead to situations that force people to leave their homes (ZFD 2017).

## 2.2 [Flight and transit](#)

In this section, the focus is on the period in which displaced persons are on the move or living in a situation with no possibility of moving forward or backward. First, it highlights the impact of conflict-induced migration on local and regional peace and stability, and how this links to peacebuilding activities. In this context, the issue of human smuggling and trafficking is discussed. In the second part of this section, some of the challenges and opportunities associated with protracted displacement situations are explored, in regards to building or sustaining peace.

### 2.2.1 Impact of migration on local and regional peace and stability

According to Mitchell (2011), migration is both a by-product of and a potential contributor to conflict. Salehyan & Skrede Gleditsch (2006) support this argument as they note that refugee movements and the presence of displaced populations can increase the risk of subsequent conflict in countries of origin and host countries. The ICRC (2016) finds that even in stable countries situations of fragility arise around vulnerable groups such as IDP's, refugees and migrants. Most refugees, IDPs and migrants in the world move within or from one fragile, conflict-affected or developing country to another (UNHCR 2016). Often, these countries lack the financial and administrative means to cope with the resulting challenges. In these contexts, migratory movements can have destabilizing effects on the security of countries, including entire regions (e.g. Great Lakes region).

Not only does the arrival of large populations increase costs (for instance for additional infrastructure), but it may also cause anxiety among the host community concerning social cohesion and economic opportunities. For instance, massive inflow of refugees can create growing competition over scarce natural resources as well as jobs and social services. This can eventually lead to grievances and resentment by the receiving communities, especially when they feel that refugees receive preferential treatment by the government and humanitarian agencies. Changes in ethnic, religious and linguistic composition of the receiving population are often perceived as a threat and can thus destabilize social and political balances. The presence of IDP's, refugees or migrants might also shift the balance of power in the community and/or exacerbate previously existing inter-communal tensions (Lohrmann 2000; Milner 2010). In an interview, Meghna Guhathakurta, executive director of Research Initiatives Bangladesh, points to the increasingly hostile relationship between the host community and the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. In her opinion, the sudden influx of a large number of people over a short period led to increased insecurity and the destabilization of previously harmonious relationships between locals, many of whom are disadvantaged minorities themselves, and Rohingya refugees fleeing from Myanmar. In addition, new tensions have started to emerge within the refugee population, between the refugees who have been in Cox's Bazar for up to thirty years, and those who have arrived only recently. New restrictions and regulations, imposed by the government as a reaction to the humanitarian crisis, have the potential to disturb the existing order, as they clash with local survival strategies, and fuel tensions. Yet, according to Guhathakurta, state and non-state actors on the ground have thus far failed to address these tensions adequately.<sup>3</sup>

Further, although the majority of refugees, IDPs and migrants do not engage directly in violence, their movement can facilitate the spread of arms, combatants, and ideologies conducive to conflict. Part of Boko Haram's insurgency tactics in the Lake Chad Basin, for instance, is to disguise themselves as refugees in order to carry out attacks. Such an impersonation of refugees for violent extremist purposes has consequences for social cohesion in host communities as it drives and inflames public distrust of refugee communities and promotes the association between refugees and violent extremism. Further, it turns victims into potential suspects. This was exemplified in the case of the return of about 800 Nigerian refugees from Cameroon in 2017 following an increased spate of attacks in Northern Cameroon, a few of which were carried out by Boko Haram's foot soldiers masked as refugees. A breakdown in community cohesion in turn can make vulnerable groups susceptible to extremist narratives [see Chapter 2.2.3] (Bukarti 2017; Comerford 2017).

Moreover, refugee camps located close to borders may serve as logistical bases for political and military activities with a view to undermine the situation in the country of origin. The camps provide a relatively safe space for persecuted and/or displaced groups, in which they can begin to reorganize, reformulate their

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Meghna Guhathakurta [Executive Director of Research Initiatives Bangladesh], 1.03.2018; Interview with Gabriele Grossenbacher [Lawyer, Volunteer at Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust BLAST], 28.02.2018

political objectives and potentially plan attacks. So-called “spoilers” can thus pose a considerable challenge to peacebuilding efforts. This was the case, for instance, in Burundi, Liberia, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sudan (Milner 2011). Comerford (2017) mentions that due to their transience and permanence, refugee and IDP camps “often become microcosms for neighbouring conflicts [in host countries or regions], as grievances, sectarian sentiment, a lack of job opportunities and uncertain identities risk becoming deeply rooted across generations”.

Whereas IDP’s, refugees and migrants can put a strain on the economy, social and political order, and security of a receiving country, they can also have positive effects. The presence of IDPs, refugees and migrants can for instance increase the inflow of emergency and development aid through the international community, introduce new agricultural techniques and products and contribute to developing local trade opportunities (Lohrmann 2000). Given the opportunity to interact with the local economy, refugees “can create positive income spillovers for host-country households”. This finding is the result of a study that analyzes the economic impacts of refugees on host-country economies within a 10-km radius of three Congolese refugee camps in Rwanda (Taylor et al. 2016). In fact, Jacobsen (2003: 95) finds that “refugees’ pursuit of livelihoods can increase human security because economic activities help to recreate social and economic interdependence within and between communities, and can restore social networks based on the exchange of labour, assets and food”. In addition, while irregular migration can pose a threat to security, it also pushes states towards cooperation, exchange of information and coordination of policies at the regional level. From this perspective, Lohrmann (2000) argues that irregular migration might contribute to regional confidence building and stability. Similarly, Loescher and Milner (2009) highlight the fact that refugees often have skills critical to regional development and statebuilding. However, they also contest that strategies of containment prevent them from making any valuable contribution to these processes.

Milner (2010) contends that debates on peacebuilding have failed to address the regional nature of conflict as they mainly focus on peacebuilding activities in the country of origin. Yet,

*“Peacebuilding is very much essential to a first responder [in a refugee crisis]. This kind of thinking must be introduced very soon.”*

*Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta, 2018*

the presence of refugees in neighbouring countries can represent a significant cross-border issue between the country of origin and the host country that should be taken into account in peacebuilding initiatives. Similarly, in a study about the real and perceived effects of international migration on national and regional security in industrialized and developing countries, Lohrmann (2000:3) concludes that there is a “need for the establishment of a comprehensive framework of international cooperation among origin and receiving countries and international organizations”. Therefore, the challenge is to find an approach, which moves beyond a focus on the country in question to include refugee-hosting countries in the region. The International Peace Institute (IPI) identifies the need for systematic and comprehensive approaches to manage refugee situations and forge linkages between these situations and peacebuilding processes at the regional and subregional level. With regard to migration governance, IPI suggests taking into account the following three dimensions 1) dealing with refugees and their immediate needs while in exile, 2) finding solutions for refugees, e.g. repatriation, and 3) assisting transit and host countries as they face political, economic, environmental and social challenges associated with sudden influx of noncitizens (IPI 2011).

Relief interventions are no longer expected to solely respond to an emergency in the short term, but rather to lay the foundation for future development and to promote conflict resolution (Jacobsen 2003). Therefore, in order to find comprehensive solutions and design effective responses to the above-mentioned challenges, humanitarian actors who are primarily in charge of dealing with refugees and their immediate needs, such as the UNHCR, must get support from peace, security and development actors (Milner 2010). In this context, Guhathakurta notes that first responders in a humanitarian crisis such as the recent Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh must have a better understanding of peacebuilding concepts and methods in order to respond adequately to the specific challenges of conflict-induced migration, and to



prevent the emergence of new conflicts.<sup>4</sup> The Berghof Foundation for example applies the concept of conflict sensitivity specifically to the field of professional and voluntary refugee assistance, where “[...] well-intended actions are often followed by misperceptions and frustrations that may culminate in the use of violence, instead of the envisioned outcome”. The organization has made good experiences with their workshop format on conflict sensitive refugee assistance for volunteers engaged in the field, both in Germany and in Jordan (Nolden and Schützko (ed.) 2016).

### 2.2.2 Smuggling<sup>5</sup> and trafficking<sup>6</sup> of refugees and migrants

The terms “smuggling” or “smugglers” are often used interchangeably with “trafficking” or “traffickers”. Human smuggling and trafficking both involve the recruitment, movement and delivery from a host to a destination state. The difference lies in the fact that while traffickers exploit and enslave trafficked persons, smuggled refugees and migrants have a consensual relationship with the smugglers and are free to go at the end of the journey (Global Initiative 2016; Shelley 2014). Smugglers exist on a wide spectrum between legality and illegality reaching from ordinary, community-based people, who offer a lifeline to refugees and migrants unable to move otherwise, to exploitative, well organized criminal networks involving violence, exploitation and forced labor (Global Initiative 2016).

Carling et al. (2015) argue that smuggling has become the new normal, as it is the only avenue for a large majority of refugees and migrants who wish or who are forced to leave their countries of origin and who cannot do so legally. In 2015-2016 Crowley et al. conducted a research project on the backgrounds, experiences, routes and aspirations of refugees and migrants in three EU Member States - Italy, Greece and Malta - and Turkey. In this context, the authors found that all of their respondents engaged the services of smugglers for at least one part of their journey to Greece or Italy (Crowley et al. 2016).

The price for the smuggling services as well as the power balance between the smugglers and refugees or migrants depends on factors such as distances to be covered and risks related to area and border crossings. The longer the distances and the higher the risks, the higher are the demand for smuggling services and the prices. The more profitable the business, the more well-organized and/or criminal groups and networks highly proficient in illicit tracking in other commodities are attracted. At the same time, where the demand for smuggling services is high and refugees and migrants do not have other legal or safe options for movement, the more the power balance shifts towards the smugglers. This allows them to charge higher prices for their services and to be more risk-accepting on the one hand, and on the other hand renders refugees and migrants even more vulnerable and exposes them to higher risks and exploitative practices (The Global Initiative 2016; Reitano 2017). The UN Convention against Transnational Crime (UNTOC) defines cases involving such degrading and inhumane treatment, which could be characterized as *trafficking* of refugees and migrants, as ‘aggravated offenses’. (Gallagher & David 2014).

At the same time, smuggling can have a stabilizing effect on a whole region. Tinti and Westcott (2016) who conducted interviews with local communities and smugglers for their research on the Niger-Libya corridor confirm this. They argue that the economy in Northern Niger has benefitted so much from the smuggling boom that revenues from smuggling of migrants have become one of the most important stabilising factors. Hence, counter-smuggling efforts can have a destabilizing effect on an already volatile region and reduce human security if they are not based on a nuanced understanding of local dynamics and the interests and

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Meghna Guhathakurta, 1.03.2018

<sup>5</sup> According to the Protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Crime (UNTOC) Smuggling of Migrants is defined as “the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident”.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Crime (UNTOC) Human Trafficking is defined as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion abduction, of fraud or deception”.

needs of all the actors involved. One of the smugglers, many of whom are former combatants, said: "When there are no more migrants, we will go back to war, or we will kidnap white people [for ransom]" (Tinti and Westcott 2016: 17).

*"Smuggling has become the new normal, as it is the only avenue for a large majority of refugees and migrants."*

*Carling et al., 2015*

While measures undertaken to counter human smuggling stem predominantly from the fields of criminal justice as well as "hard" security approaches (as for example the Force Commune G5Sahel), counter trafficking interventions are often comprehensive and multidisciplinary. However, the securitization of borders and efforts to prevent migration often do not reach their objectives. On the contrary, The Global

Initiative found that responses to smuggling of migrants focusing only on law enforcement and criminal justice resulted in a commoditization and increased vulnerability of refugees and migrants (Global Initiative 2016). This can potentially lead to a 'vicious policy circle' in the sense that by using exploitative and abusive practices, smuggling could be defined as trafficking, what is then used as a justification to impose even harsher border controls and policies to prevent human smuggling. With the demand remaining high and the level of surveillance and penalty increasing, the scale of violence, exploitation and abuse in the smuggling business increases as well. At the end, only the most professional and corrupt actors are able to continue their illicit activities justifying further targeting by state security (Reitano 2017).

In Libya, the EU- and Italy-led effort to stem the flow of migrants led to the emergence of an anti-smuggling business with armed groups trying to launder their reputation by accepting to serve as law enforcement partners of the international actors. Hence, militia groups are part of the coastguard, manage detention centres or run other key security branches. Through this co-option, militia leaders are not only legitimised and their groups retain their organisational structures and agendas, the revenues from the smuggling business also provide them with the financial resources to continue their illicit activities. This not only leads to increased instability in parts of the country and undermines the state-building process, but also subjugates refugees and migrants to further exploitation and abuse. Rather than applying a 'cash-for-migration-control-strategy' in Libya, the militia groups' interest in being legitimized, should be used to initiate genuine disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) processes in Libya to ultimately constrain the rents that militia groups could obtain from criminal activities (Micallef & Reitano 2017, Gazzini 2017).

Moreover, an important risk of a strategy focusing on border controls and restricting mobility is that it creates stagnant populations in transit countries. Reitano et al. (2017) argue that stagnant populations with a strong unsatisfied desire to migrate can become sources of insecurity and easy recruitment grounds not only for smugglers, human traffickers and other criminal groups, but also for extremist ideologies.

The above-mentioned points highlight the need to move away from responses focusing on border security and support to state security institutions towards more integrated responses supporting stability, good governance and development (Reitano et al. 2017).

In a 2017 policy brief, The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime recommends making use of law enforcement action and criminal justice penalties at the most damaging end of the smuggling spectrum, in cases of transnationally organized crime groups and/or where practices of abuse, violence and extortion are used. Targeting lower level smugglers, who are intrinsically embedded in the local communities and in family networks, and whose livelihood depends on servicing the smuggling industry, usually shows little impact. In some cases, breaking down the smuggling industry creates more harm especially in those areas where there are few other income options (The Global 2017). At the same time, given the community nature of smuggling, possible entry points to change and re-shape the industry could be found at the same level. Therefore, debates and responses need to shift from the state to the community level (Reitano et al. 2017).

Reitano argues that understanding smuggling primarily as a driver of migration rather than as a crime, would allow to anticipate large-scale movements and to increase the preparedness, as well as to take appropriate preventive measures to improve the protection of refugees and migrants (2017). While focusing on human trafficking, Cockayne & Oppermann (2017) advocate for a similar strategy, which combines response and prevention. The authors draw from the example of Libya, where smuggling and trafficking are embedded in the political-economic landscape of the country, and thus deeply entwined with conflict dynamics. Their nuanced perspective points to the need for a wider-ranging response. The authors suggest that a better understanding of human trafficking could provide an entry point to understand and address underlying drivers of on-going violence and conflict. This would allow, for example, for insights on how human trafficking affects existing power relations, which in turn play a role in driving violent conflict in the country. Building on this, anti-trafficking initiatives could offer an opportunity for peacebuilding to address the underlying drivers of ongoing crisis and violence, and thus represent a step towards managing, mitigating and preventing future conflict. Overall, this would represent a move towards seeing anti-trafficking as an aspect of the larger push towards an integrated approach to conflict prevention (Cockayne & Oppermann 2017).

Reitano et al. (2017) emphasize that protecting vulnerable stagnant migrant communities is critical for the refugees and migrants themselves, but also to prevent them from becoming a security threat or a source of political unrest. The authors stress the importance of finding multiple locations and means where refugees and migrants can safely disperse and find productive livelihoods in alternative locations. Hence, programmes to create more sustainable options for work, safe living conditions and more welcoming environment could provide alternatives for many refugees and migrants.

At the same time, Reitano et al. (2017) argue that an alternative to closing borders and creating stagnant populations could be to disperse refugees and migrants as thinly and widely as possible by offering incentives and alternatives for localized, sub-regional opportunities for migration. Experience has shown that in regions where freedom of movement exists, as for example the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the smuggling industry makes little profits and therefore remains a marginal activity.

Further analysis of the different actors involved in human smuggling and trafficking is needed in order to foresee and prevent the formation of organized criminal networks and large-scale migration flows. A more detailed analysis of the political economy of smuggling routes and hubs could enhance the understanding of likely impacts of migration flows on the local socio-economic situation (Global Initiative 2017). Further research could also be conducted to better understand the potentials of peacebuilding in the context of human smuggling and trafficking. This includes questions such as how a better understanding of the dynamics of human trafficking can contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of armed conflict and where efforts to prevent trafficking create opportunities for conflict resolution and prevention, or what partnerships with other actors from different fields such as development cooperation or private sector do peacebuilding actors have to be able to lastingly disrupt incentives to recur to smuggling services and to sustain peace (Cockayne & Oppermann 2017).

### [2.2.3 Protracted displacement situations](#)

Violent conflicts and human rights violations that persist for years create protracted displacement situations. The UNHCR defines these situations as follows: “When 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile in a particular country for five consecutive years, this is classed as a ‘protracted refugee situation’ (UNHCR n.d.; UNHCR 2016). According to Loescher & Milner (2011: 4), “[...] long-term displacement is the combined result of the prevailing situations in the country of origin, the policy responses of the country of asylum, and the lack of sufficient engagement in these situations by a range of other actors.” Protracted displacement situations are among the most complex and difficult humanitarian problems facing the international community (Aleinikoff 2015).



The majority of refugees and IDPs in the world today live in protracted situations (e.g. Palestinian refugees). A distinctive feature of protracted displacement situations is that even though one has moved past the emergency phase, there are no sustainable solutions in the near future (Loescher & Milner 2009; Aleinikoff 2015). Refugees, IDPs and migrants caught in these situations are forced to live in a state of limbo, mainly in urban areas where they lead 'invisible' lives or in refugee camps where they remain dependent on aid, often frustrated and unable to fulfil their potential (Loescher & Milner 2009).

### Politicization, radicalization and violent extremism in displacement

There are concerns that refugee and IDP camps provide particularly fertile ground for radicalization and recruitment for extremist groups (Comerford 2017). Evidence points to countries such as Pakistan, Somalia or Yemen. A further example dating back to the 1970s and 1980s is the rise of the Hutu rebel group 'Palipehutu' (Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People) from within the Burundian refugee population in Tanzania (ICG 1999). Similarly, in the case of Rwanda, the failure to find solutions for refugees who fled between 1959 and 1962, and then remained in exile for about thirty years, was later recognized as a key factor in setting in motion the events that led to the genocide in 1994. Many of the refugees had joined the ranks of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the party that invaded Rwanda in 1990 (Milner 2011).

Koser (2015) stresses that the longer refugees and IDPs live in protracted displacement situations, the higher is their risk for radicalization. Moreover, there is a risk that radicalized refugees and IDPs eventually return to their homes and undermine on-going peace efforts there. IDPs and refugees often remain engaged in political processes in their countries of origin. For instance, Palestinian refugees, whose plight dates back more than five decades, have been politically active since the 1990s, demanding recognition of their rights and an inclusive process to finding permanent solutions (Rempel 2006). However, Milner (2011) argues that in situations where opportunities for political participation are not given, displaced groups can become politicized or radicalized during displacement. In fact, "[d]isregarding refugees' interests may be outright destructive to peace processes - where opportunities for political participation are not guaranteed, refugees in exile risk becoming detrimentally politicized or militarized" (Janmyr 2016). A failure to consult with refugees and IDPs during peace processes, address their needs and find solutions to their displacement, has negative implications for peace. It can further escalate existing tensions or contribute to new ones, thus undermining post-conflict peacebuilding (The Brookings Institution – University of Bern 2007; Solomon 2009).

A study that explores the background to *Jihadist Radicalisation in Switzerland* paints a more nuanced picture by laying out the complexity of the processes by which an individual becomes radicalized. It looks at what stimulates the processes that drive young people towards jihadist radicalization and thereby points to a range of factors, such as world views, experiences, needs and problems that act as push and pull factors on the radicalization path. The study indicates the need to look at historical conditions of each conflict in its totality, the circumstances particular to each territory and the way in which an individual relates to those circumstances. However, the study also puts forward that for various reasons including a greater willingness to take risks, a particular receptiveness to emotional and social stimuli and other psychosocial reasons, puberty is a phase of heightened susceptibility to extreme positions and lifestyles. In migration societies especially, gaining a sense of social belonging, not to mention national allegiance, is a key aspect of adolescent (self-) positioning. Yet, for young people with migration background the transition to adulthood, e.g. redefining relationships with the family, is particularly challenging as it often happens in the already difficult context of social marginalization and discrimination (e.g. lack of equality in educational and occupational terms, social stigma, exclusionary debate regarding national identity, islamophobia) (Davolio et al. 2015).

The results of the study on jihadist radicalization in Switzerland show that "stakeholders are generally equipped to deal with youth violence and have established collaborative networks, but lack the background knowledge and orientation required for effective prevention and intervention strategies with regard to this

particular phenomenon” (Davolio et al. 2015: 4). Therefore, the authors suggest promoting dialogue and constructive partnerships with the respective groups, its organisations and public institutions in order to address these problems jointly. This case study points to the need for more inclusion, subject-specific knowledge and adequate tools for preventing and countering violent extremism.

Koser and Cunningham (2016) point out that poor education, unemployment and restricted freedom of movement exacerbate the risk of radicalization. Similarly, the IOM (2018) considers radicalization to violent extremism among settled migrants and refugees and their descendants as a symptom of social exclusion. Thus, their recommendation is to invest more in providing education, access to work, and, where possible, greater freedom of movement, at all stages of displacement, but in particular in refugee and transit camps. In this context, peacebuilding measures can contribute to building resilience, for instance by providing peace education for displaced (e.g. “Nonviolent education in Jordan”, a project by the Berghof Foundation; “Teaching Peace, Building Resilience”, a project by International Alert)<sup>7</sup> or by ensuring inclusive processes that work towards finding sustainable solutions for people in protracted displacement situations. In order to better understand the links between migration and violent extremism, and thus possibly to address common misconceptions, the IOM suggests creating opportunities for more dialogue between policymakers responsible for migration and those in charge of preventing violent extremism. Here, peacebuilding organizations can contribute to painting a differentiated picture by providing insights from the ground (e.g. the work of interpeace on issues of exclusion, social cohesion and trajectories of young people towards violence (interpeace 2018). In general, there is a need to examine and question links between conflict-induced migration, protracted displacement and radicalization, while keeping in mind that “Policymakers have a difficult and important balance to strike, by recognising that extremists are targeting some refugee communities for recruitment, but without framing entire vulnerable populations as an inherent security threat” (Comerford 2017).

### Durable solutions

In migration research, policy and practice, so-called durable solutions to refugee situations have traditionally included local integration, voluntary repatriation and resettlement. Politically, and from the perspective of the international community, voluntary repatriation represents the most favourable option. However, IDP’s, refugees and migrants can (or should) only return once stability and safety are guaranteed (Krause 2016).

After the Second World War, the international community was able to solve protracted refugee situations (e.g. the Indochina refugee crisis) by drawing on all the available solutions (integration, resettlement and repatriation) and relying on sustained engagement by a wide range of actors. Three decades later, Loescher and Milner (2009) reminded the international community that such an integrated and comprehensive approach is needed to solve protracted situations. Moreover, Newman (2007) argued for a deeper understanding of the links between long-term displacement and peacebuilding. Since there is no clear-cut boundary between conflict and post-conflict, the negative spiral of violent conflict and displacement can only be halted by an approach in which relief and long-term development and peacebuilding efforts and actors are coordinated (Bohnet & Rudolf 2015).

In an era of increasing intolerance towards immigration, these arguments remain valid. Efforts at improving coordination and cooperation between security, humanitarian and development/peacebuilding actors are needed. However, in addition, in the context of long-term displacement situations it has been argued that the three ‘durable solutions’ are increasingly unsuitable (Brun & Fábos 2017). In other words, one of the problems facing refugee protection is a “[...] portfolio of durable solutions that are unappealing to states

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<sup>7</sup> For further information, see: <https://www.berghof-foundation.org/nc/en/programmes/peace-education-global-learning/nonviolent-education-in-jordan/> and <https://www.international-alert.org/publications/teaching-peace-building-resilience> [accessed 25.05.2018].

and unachievable in most refugee situations (McConnachie et al. 2017: 176). In *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, Long (2014) argues the need to re-think durable solutions and to move away from the inherent sedentary bias of state-centric responses to migration during conflict and crisis towards emphasizing refugees' mobility to enable them to come up with their own transformative solutions. Further, she criticizes the framing of the 'refugee problem' in terms of physical dislocation solely. Rather, she suggests focusing on finding a solution to the denial of political rights of refugees and IDP's as citizens in order to 'solve' forced migration. A recent article by Allsopp & Chase (2017: 1) concludes that the current policy framework is shaped by a state-centric view of migration, a static conception of belonging and a bias towards a political preference for return. As such, it fails to offer a durable solution for or act in the best interest of society as a whole.

There are, however, examples from policy and practice, that point in the direction of change. An example of innovation in this field, building on the trend towards 'whole of government' approaches to peacebuilding, is the establishment of the Canadian Inter-departmental Working Group on Protracted Refugee Situations<sup>8</sup> aimed at developing a 'whole-of-government' response to the issue. Further, the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration are the most recent innovations on a global level. The former offers an opportunity for actors to increase burden sharing in acute crisis and the latter embraces all the essential aspects of international cooperation in this field and links to the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. Both initiatives are a step towards creating a conceptual framework that enables better coordination of efforts in migration governance. The ongoing inter-state negotiations in this context might be an opportune moment to promote concrete and measurable goals and a monitoring process with clear deadlines and division of responsibilities and costs (Angenendt 2017). As a response to the critiques on temporary measures in the context of protracted refugee situations, in 2014 the UNHCR introduced a strategy to pursue "Alternatives to Camps" (UNHCR 2014; Krause 2016). The policy is a shift away from temporary "emergency" responses, towards providing alternatives that allow refugees "[...] to exercise their rights and freedoms, make meaningful choices about issues affecting their lives, contribute to their community and live with greater dignity and independence". The aim is to enable refugees to settle in communities or to facilitate the transformation of camps into sustainable settlements (UNHCR 2017). Similarly, following the recent demands for refugee protection models that integrate rights and needs of refugees and migrants and offer new solutions such as refugee mobility strategies, in 2016 IOM introduced a new framework – the Progressive Resolution of Displacement Situations (PRDS) Framework. It aims at informing IOM and its partners on how "to frame and navigate the complexity of forced migration dynamics and support efforts to progressively resolve displacement situations" (IOM 2018b).<sup>9</sup>

*"There is no clear-cut boundary between conflict and post-conflict."*

*Bohnet & Rudolf, 2015*

In this context, it could also be worthwhile to explore other innovative ways of cooperation with less obvious disciplines such as architecture. An enhanced understanding of how people live in refugee and IDP camps and how spaces are used, furnished and arranged within camps might provide insights on how the set up and architecture of camps would have to be adapted so that IDPs and refugees could live a life in dignity, possibly even resembling their way of life before the flight. However, more research is needed to better understand the relationship between notions of home and identity, and living conditions during displacement.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For further information on Canada's whole of government approach see: Dion, A. (2003) The search for comprehensive solutions: Canada's 'whole of government' approach. *Forced Migration Review*. September 2009. [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/textOnlyContent/FMR/33/Dion.doc](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/textOnlyContent/FMR/33/Dion.doc) [accessed 16.04.2018]

<sup>9</sup> For further information on the PRDS framework see: <https://www.iom.int/progressive-resolution-displacement-situations> [accessed 24.05.2018].

<sup>10</sup> See for example the work of Manuel Herz in West Sahara, <http://www.manuelherz.com/pavilion-of-the-western-sahara> [accessed 24.05.2018].

## 2.3 [Return](#)

The disinclination of many states to host refugees and migrants, as well as the fact that people who flee from conflict are expected to return after the end of the conflict, has contributed to a political focus on return (Allsopp & Chase 2017). Not much attention has been paid to what happens with returnees after they are back 'home' (Chimni 2002). In this context, Allsopp & Chase (2017) discuss the challenges of considering 'return' a 'durable solution' and look at the long-term wellbeing outcomes and trajectories of returnees. According to the authors, there is little knowledge on reintegration experiences, the extent of re-migration and long-term wellbeing outcomes. However, there is growing evidence, for example from returnees to Afghanistan, that outcomes of returning are characterized by danger and insecurity. Especially among young migrants who either fled as children and thus have no sense of belonging towards their countries of origin or whose life plans and migratory experiences are incompatible with the demand to return, a resort is either to 'disappear' or to re-migrate. Thus, even though return as a durable solution arguably serves the state rather than the individual, it has unintended consequences for both.

Against this background, this section reviews the literature on returning refugees, IDPs or migrants to their country of origin. Based on the understanding of return as a process, rather than the end of a displacement cycle, it focuses on the conditions necessary for safe and sustainable return. Further, this section looks at inclusion and participation of returnees in post-conflict peacebuilding, dealing with the past and reconciliation processes.

### 2.3.1 [Return as a process](#)

A post-conflict situation is not simply the end of all conflict, but rather a transitory situation in which significant levels of violence can continue to exist and which might re-ignite into open violent confrontation. Thinking beyond the classical clear-cut sequencing of pre-, actual, and post-conflict situations sets the grounds for an understanding of return as a complex process involving several stages and dimensions, which is not simply a reversal of displacement (Bohnet & Rudolf 2015).

In an attempt to understand what happens after return, Black and Koser (1999) question whether the 'refugee cycle' ends after repatriation, as was the hope of many after the Cold War. The authors find that return rather coincides with the beginning of a new cycle, namely that of reintegration. Often, IDPs, refugees and migrants 'return' to a new environment, in which they must negotiate notions of identity, home and citizenship. An understanding of the challenges that returnees face is key to tapping their potential to contribute to post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding.

According to Van Houte (2014), a pitfall consists in assuming that repatriation will restore normalcy or serve as the ultimate proof of peace. Due to protracted conflicts and post-conflict situations, refugees, migrants and IDPs spend significant time away from their homes. Consequently, peaceful repatriation depends on the conditions under which it takes place.

### 2.3.2 [Conditions for sustainable return](#)

Bohnet et al. (2015) argue that the sustainability of return depends on the capability of governments to resolve disputes and inequalities that preceded displacement, to guarantee justice and to hold perpetrators accountable. Thus, establishing conditions under which refugees and migrants can return to their countries of origin is key to state- and peacebuilding processes (Zaum 2011). Peacebuilding measures are necessary to ensure safe return, by addressing issues of security, property, reconciliation and transitional justice, post-conflict reconstruction and political transitions (Brookings Institution – University of Bern 2007). Both Ogata and Chimni (2002) note that sustainable return requires addressing long-term challenges of returnees.

There is a need to address and understand causes of conflicts both to prevent refugee movements, and to create suitable conditions for post-conflict returnees. This implies a move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. About two decades ago, drawing on the experiences of Rwandan refugees, Pottier argued,

“It is only through the continuous gathering of detailed, reliable knowledge regarding fast-changing political processes that the UN refugee organization, and the international community at large, can become sufficiently informed to help negotiate terms conducive to dignified repatriation and lasting peace” (1996: 429).

Critiques on early repatriation include the negative impact on already fragile institutions and the resulting inability to provide for the returning population (Milner 2011). In this way, return policies can potentially compromise state-building efforts. Returning refugees can exacerbate already dire economic situations and add to the growing potential of social conflict, due to an increase in poverty and overall frustration. As long as the root causes of displacement are not addressed, early repatriation bears the risk to contribute to renewed displacements, as seen in Guinea with Liberian refugees, with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh or Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Similarly, involuntary returns can have a negative impact on political processes in countries of origin as they may re-ignite violent conflict and generate new waves of IDPs or refugees (Bohnet et al. 2015). Van Houte (2014) argues that only voluntary returnees are potential contributors to peace processes. In the case of Afghanistan, continued transnational mobility, thus the ability to maintain ties to host countries, is what enabled voluntary returnees to get involved in negotiating change. Therefore, Van Houte (2014) argues that migration policy must address issues of transnational mobility and identity. Bohnet et al. (2015) demonstrate that the exclusion of IDPs, refugees and of host communities from peace processes and peacebuilding efforts can create new tensions and pose risks to the stability of peace and it might leave the causes that forced people to migrate unaddressed.

Further, considerations of changes in gender relations have to be taken into account to support successful and sustainable reintegration. Conflict-induced migration often leads to shifts in gendered roles and responsibilities for both women and men. For example, when fleeing or migrating without their husbands, women might have assumed more responsibilities and diversified their activities in their host communities during their displacement. In fact, donors are often more inclined to fund programmes for women and children, than for the elderly, youth and men (e.g. Lebanon, Bourj al-Barajneh camp) (Mahmoud & Roberts 2018). Thus, women might benefit from training and development programmes in health, education and

income-generating activities during displacement (Jolly & Reeves 2005; Bohnet et al. 2015). The skills acquired through these programmes specifically targeting women and girls, can enable them to assume new roles in society. However, especially upon return, these changes in

traditional roles, in combination with the effects of trauma and stress, can also create tensions. New and continued forms of aggression against women in post-conflict situations amount to what is sometimes referred to as a ‘postwar backlash against women’ (Pankhurst 2008). In this phase, studies have observed an increase in domestic violence, divorces and broken families (Bohnet et al. 2015). A recent example is the increase in domestic violence reported by local NGOs working in the Bourj al-Barajneh camp in Lebanon. They find that the restrictions on the right to work for male Palestinian refugees make it particularly hard for them to fulfil their traditional roles as breadwinners, leading to frustration that can manifest itself in violence (Mahmoud & Roberts 2018). Further, gender related cultural norms might have changed while in exile and thus complicate reintegration. Finally, armed conflict also increases the number of female single headed households, which face particular challenges upon return. In many contexts, women are not entitled

*“Establishing conditions under which refugees and migrants can return to their countries of origin is key to state- and peacebuilding processes.”*

*Zaum, 2011*



to own or inherit land, have lower levels of education and know less about their rights (Jolly & Reeves 2005; Grabska 2014; Bohnet et al. 2015).

In post-conflict reconstruction processes, the foundations of peace are laid out. The agreements that are made in this process usually set the course for the political and socioeconomic development of a country. Therefore, it is necessary to include a gender perspective and ensure the representation of different societal groups within the displaced populations from an early stage. Failure to do so generates an incomplete understanding of the differential impact of armed conflict and decisions made in the peace agreement on different groups of women, girls, men and boys. It further can lead to the exclusion of these groups in post-conflict reconstruction (Pankhurst 2008).

Increasingly, there is a recognition that IDP's, refugees and migrants have skills that are critical to peacebuilding and development (Loescher & Milner 2009). Scholars and practitioners have pointed to the need for constructive use of time spent in prolonged exile to avoid wasting this potential. Peace education and skills training are key to valuable contributions to peacebuilding, state building and reconciliation (Janmyr 2016). According to Sharpe and Cordova (2009: 47), this investment could equip returning refugee populations to rebuild an economy, to reconcile with former community members and mediate conflicts during what are likely to be fragile recovery and reintegration processes. Lack of education during prolonged displacement situations affects the potential role of refugees and IDPs in peace and development processes as well as their integration into the host society, thereby affecting entire generations (e.g. lack of safe spaces for children to heal and learn in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh).<sup>11</sup>

### [2.3.3 Inclusion and participation in peacebuilding processes](#)

#### [Peace negotiations and agreements](#)

As discussed previously, under the right conditions, refugees, IDP's and migrants can act as agents of change and have a positive influence on peace processes (Van Houte & Davids 2014). Ogata (1997) argues that repatriation should reinforce rather than compromise peace and thus has to be an integral part of a peacebuilding process.

While refugees and migrants in the diaspora can play a role as 'peacewreckers' by reproducing conflict attitudes, they can also play a very important role as bridge-builders and foster constructive dialogue processes. This was the case, for example, with the Somalian and Eritrean diaspora as they contributed to documents that enabled peace dialogue, or in the case of the participation of Burundian refugees in the Arusha peace talks.

The migration research group at PRIO (n.d.) addresses links between mobility, transnationalism, peace and conflict. PRIO emphasizes the multi-faceted nature of migration and transnationalism. Moving from an initial focus on immigrants, recent research on transnationalism suggests a two-way interaction between people living in the diaspora and people who stay in the countries of origin. From this perspective, PRIO looks at the interplay between mobility, transnational ties and development processes in communities of origin.

When it comes to mediation processes, Koser (2008) stresses that a lack of education, political skills and legitimate leaders often constitute considerable obstacles to a direct participation of returning IDPs and refugees in in peace negotiations, especially at track one negotiations. Therefore, track two negotiations have gained in legitimacy. As less formal problem solving settings, they often provide important local insights to track one negotiations. Alternatively, international mediators can consult with displaced groups and bring their voices into the negotiation process (Koser 2008).

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Meghna Guhathakurta, 1.03.2018; Interview with Gabriele Grossenbacher, 28.02.2018

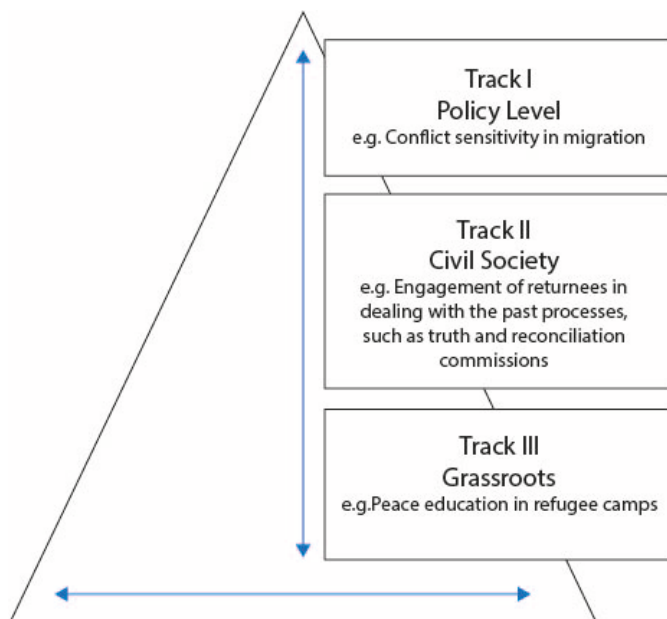


Figure 3: Levels of action and relationships in migration governance (own source, based on the Conflict Pyramid by J. P. Lederach)

swisspeace is currently conducting a research project on the role of mediators in norm diffusion. In most peacebuilding processes, mediation plays a key role. A mediation process, therefore, could be an opportune moment to promote international norms, such as inclusivity, gender equality or transitional justice. In this context, Hellmüller et al. (2017: 6) argue that “[...] mediators are often not only expected to facilitate processes aimed at ending hostilities between warring parties, but are asked to integrate a specific set of norms held by their mandate-givers into their mediation strategies”.

According to Koser (2008), it is important that peace agreements clarify the obligations of governments towards displaced populations as well as roles and responsibilities with regard to durable solutions. Bohnet et al. (2015) refer to the Rwandan Peace Agreement as a mostly successful one in this regard, as it addresses questions of repatriation and resettlement of Rwandan refugees, including property issues, food, shelter and reintegration support. Similarly, the Liberia Peace Agreement and the “Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy” of 2004 consider the concerns of returning displaced populations by establishing a special body - the so called International Stabilization Force (ISF). This body coordinates the assistance to refugees, IDPs and returnees and involves a wide range of actors from civil society, who represented the concerns and interests of IDPs and returnees on the highest governmental level (Bohnet et al. 2015).

Milner (2011) stresses that a more systematic support of women groups or organizations and the inclusion of women in refugee leadership structures, can significantly enhance the role of women in peacebuilding processes as outlined in the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000). UNSCR 1325 calls for protection of women in armed conflict and women’s increased participation on all levels of conflict prevention and resolution. Further, it asks all member states to adopt a gender perspective in peace processes. According to Anderlini (2004), more inclusive peace process allows for a better understanding of complex situations, and results in a more broadly supported peace agreement. Involvement of various representatives of society, including displaced women, adds to the legitimacy of a peace process because it signals to the people that different perspectives of the conflict are being heard and addressed.

While significant gaps remain in regards to its implementation, UNSCR 1325 puts women’s participation in peace processes on the agenda. Within this framework, less attention has been paid to the specific role of *displaced* women as peacebuilding actors. According to Pessar (2001) there is a “[...] small corpus of work that interrogates gender and migration/exile from the vantage points of women’s political consciousness

and empowerment". Her study on Guatemalan refugees and returnees contributes to this corpus by highlighting the challenges associated with returning women refugees and the failures in many parts of the world "to institutionalize effectively during times of peace and reconciliation those gains in female autonomy and gender equity exacted over the course of war (2001: 490)". Pessar finds that Guatemalan women's agency in transnational refugee camps was enhanced precisely because they were 'female', and 'indigenous'. However, these same "social locations (i.e. female and indigenous) – and women's newfound identities as transnational subjects—proved highly disadvantageous once the refugees returned to the "fold" of local communities and the Guatemalan nation-state" (Pessar 2001: 461). Adding to the debate, Hansen (2016) conducts a case study focusing on the roles of refugee women in diaspora groups as peacebuilding actors in their countries of origin. This study finds that women in the Burman and Chin ethnic groups in the Norwegian-Myanmar diaspora engage in economic and social remittances to support education and contribute to peacebuilding in Myanmar. These studies point to the need for greater recognition and understanding of women's peacebuilding roles.

### [Dealing with the past](#)

Human rights violations such as mass killings, torture or rape, drive forced migration, which is in itself a violation of human rights. Moreover, some forms of violations such as destruction of homes and properties, are specifically aimed at preventing refugees and IDPs from returning home (Haider 2016). The 2004 Report of the UN Secretary General, therefore, highlights the need to "pay special attention to groups most affected by conflict" such as IDPs and refugees, and to consult them in order to be able to address their specific needs. In December 2017, swisspeace organised an expert workshop on internal displacement and transitional justice together with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs. The workshop aimed at bringing together scholars and practitioners working on internal displacement and transitional justice, in order to discuss the current state of knowledge and identify lessons learnt, best practices and recommendations for improving policies and practices in this field. The Expert Workshop informed a thematic report on the topic of IDPs and transitional justice to be presented to the General Assembly in October 2018

There is a growing interest in and recognition of involving refugees and IDPs in dealing with the past processes. Including their voices allows including a greater diversity of perspectives and a more comprehensive evidence gathering. Hence, in 2011 the Kenyan Truth Commission conducted interviews with refugees in camps in Uganda. In addition, the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone included 175 statements from refugees. The most comprehensive effort to involve refugees and diaspora in all aspects of the dealing with the past process is the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission recognizing thereby that the diaspora played a role in starting the civil war and that key witnesses, alleged perpetrators and other conflict actors were known to be among the diaspora. Ultimately, these efforts to include refugees, IDPs and diaspora increase the effectiveness of the dealing with the past initiatives and frame responses to atrocities more specifically around acknowledgement, accountability and redress (Haider 2016).

Consolidating the varying and at times differing perspectives of various communities as well as possible resentments by the home population towards the displaced population, and not least a lack of coordination between people the country of origin and abroad, pose challenges to the inclusion of refugees, IDPs and diaspora into dealing with the past processes (Haider 2016).

Furthermore, given the scope and the complexity of large-scale displacement, dealing with the past measures have only a limited capacity to deal directly with refugees and IDPs. Information regarding the possibilities of participation is sometimes not available to the refugees and IDPs. Furthermore, displaced people often lack the required identity documents. Poverty, marginalization or physical inaccessibility render it difficult for them to travel and engage. Such material and logistical challenges as well as fears for



reprisals might prevent their mobilization. Bradley & Durthie (2012) suggest ways to overcome these challenges. For instance, transitional justice measures can support participation of displaced populations “[...] by making material available in different languages, holding events in camps and in diaspora communities, sending investigators/officials to meet displaced groups, and using media and technology to disseminate information to dispersed groups and across borders”.

It is also important to include gender perspectives into these processes, as gender affects the way people live their displacement experience. Men and women suffer different abuses and face different obstacles in engaging with dealing with the past processes. While sexual and gender-based violations are often among the factors causing displacement, efforts to respond to these injustices should not only focus on these issues as concerns of displaced women also include legal, economic and social repercussions (e.g. access to property for female-headed households) (Bradley & Durthie 2012). Actors dealing with displacement generally do not focus on past abuses. Yet, often, reintegration is significantly hindered by legacies of past abuses. Thus, transitional justice measures can make important long-term contributions to resolving displacement by investing in sustainable integration or reintegration of displaced people into communities and societies. In this context the criminal justice and justice-sensitive security sector reform can improve security of displaced persons, restitution and reparations may facilitate economic reintegration and truth-telling might reduce tensions between those who were displaced, those who remained home and host communities. Finally, transitional justice processes are key to building trust between displaced persons and the state, for example by catalysing civil society organizations representing displaced persons’ interests (Bradley & Durthie 2012).

Despite the general agreement on the necessity of the inclusion of IDPs and refugees in peace dialogues and processes, they are rarely consulted or represented in formal peace processes (Zaum 2011; Janmyr 2016). For instance, in formal negotiations on the Palestinian refugee issue, refugee voices and civil society have been marginalized (Rempel 2006). Yet, various initiatives conducted in Israel and Palestine in the context of the people-to-people projects considered the refugee issue to be central and refugee societies’ analysis key to “understanding changes at the local, national, and international levels but also for rethinking policy options and peace scenarios”. Long-lasting legitimacy of a peacebuilding process can only be reached when the society is made a participative actor in the negotiations about their fate (Bocco 2009).

### 3 Concluding reflections: challenges and opportunities of a peace-migration nexus

The review of literature and debates on the nexus between peace and migration, foremost, indicates the complex and underexplored nature of the relationship between conflict, migration and peace. The study also demonstrates the need to understand conflict-induced migration as a cycle and process, in which the different phases overlap. Thus, in each chapter of this study, in each ‘phase’, there are crosscutting themes.

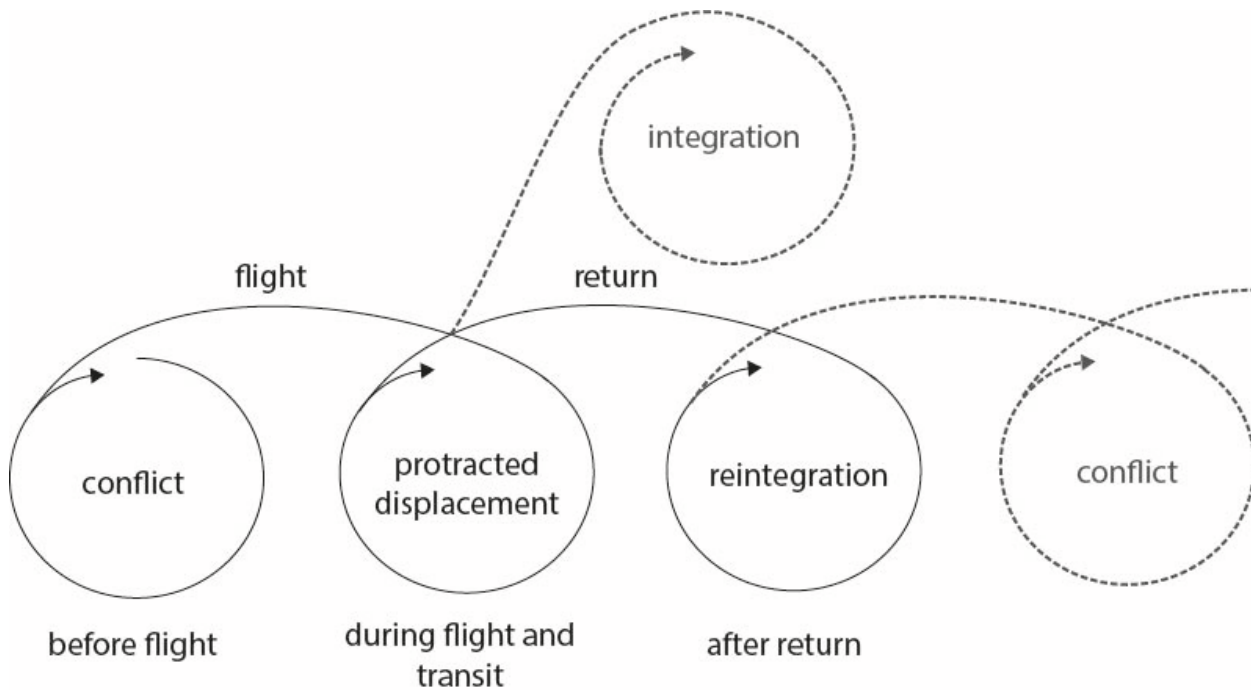


Figure 4: Conflict-induced migration as a cycle and process (own source)

First, conflict-induced migratory movements can have both de-stabilizing and stabilizing effects on the individual, community, state and regional levels, depending on the context. Recent examples from policy and practice show that a securitized approach to governing migration (e.g. counter smuggling tactics, restrictive immigration control, focus on early return) can have unintended, de-stabilizing consequences for states, societies and individuals. It can upset the social, economic and political order, and thus drive already existing conflicts or lead to the emergence of new conflicts. In other words, the failure to adopt a conflict sensitive, human rights-based, comprehensive approach in migration governance can impact negatively on social cohesion as well as state and regional stability, and increase the vulnerability of individuals.

Second, the demand for more recognition of the rights and agency of refugees, IDP's and migrants stands out in recent scholarly literature, and increasingly in policy and practice. Both the need to address political rights and the 'refugee plight' in order to prevent or 'end' displacement situations, as well as the need to ensure the participation of different groups of refugees, IDPs and migrants in political processes in their countries of origin and in host countries are key elements in this regard. Whereas forced migration, and specifically conflict-induced displacement, is not desirable and often the last resort, policies should not underestimate the agency of refugees, IDP's and migrants in shaping their trajectory and contributing to dealing with or solving their displacement situation.

Third, there is a need for better cooperation between government, security, development, humanitarian and peacebuilding actors throughout all phases to prevent the (re-) emergence of violent conflicts and facilitate peaceful transformation of existing conflicts. Increased peacebuilding efforts at all levels of migration governance and all stages of a migration cycle can contribute to sustaining peace by building resilient capacities to deal with conflict constructively, on individual, societal and state levels.

In the following, a few challenges and opportunities for the nexus between conflict-induced migration and peacebuilding are summarized, as identified in this study.

- 
- Before**
- The failure to resolve or transform conflicts peacefully and to prevent or reduce direct and structural violence can raise the probability of flight.
  - Lack of feasible and appealing alternatives for pursuing local opportunities and channelling 'desires for change' (e.g. pursuing education, entrepreneurship or political activism)
- In countries of origin, peacebuilding instruments with their inherent political focus are particularly relevant and suitable to address the structural causes of conflict-induced migration and reduce the probability of flight on the one hand (e.g. conflict prevention initiatives), and prepare the ground for safe return of refugees, IDPs and migrants to their homes on the other hand.
  - Before flight, peacebuilding can contribute to a better understanding of the underlying factors driving the conflict and leading to flight. Moreover, increased violence and displacement are warning indicators for conflict and as such can inform and shape local and international peacebuilding responses, processes and initiatives.
  - A possible avenue in this context could also be increased cooperation with, as well as supporting and strengthening of civil society actors, as they play an important role in addressing structural violence by promoting participation, building capacities and strengthening skills. This ultimately might create alternative channels for change, besides migration.
- 
- During**
- Conflicting positions in migration management between actors who seek to control, limit and securitize migration, and actors advocating for the protection and promotion of refugee and migrant rights as well as less restrictive immigration policies can lead to uncoordinated responses and indicate the need for more coherence and a common understanding of who is to be protected.
  - Securitized responses to migration (e.g. Counter Smuggling) can have negative effects for the local society as well as for the displaced persons, and can lead to the emergence or further escalation of direct and structural violence.
  - A so-called 'political impasse', resulting from an inability or unwillingness to solve conflicts in countries of origin and the inability or unwillingness to integrate refugees and migrants in host countries, can lead to protracted displacement situations and, potentially, human rights violations.
  - Protracted displacement situations, as well as stagnant migrant communities, can result in a waste of potential and an increase in frustration and grievances, leading to new conflicts and violence.
- In the transit phase, when people are on the move, as well as in refugee camps, peacebuilding has not played a predominant role. However, peacebuilding measures such as capacity building, peace education or initiatives to strengthen identity can make a valuable contribution to the work of humanitarian actors. With its focus on addressing structural issues, peacebuilding adds a valuable, long-term dimension to humanitarian interventions, especially in the context of protracted displacement situations. Lastly, innovative forms of cooperation with less obvious fields, such as architecture, could be explored to tap the full potential of peacebuilding.
  - Peacebuilding also offers tools and methods that aim to reduce the negative impact of interventions (e.g. conflict sensitivity, do no harm). Therefore, it might add a valuable dimension to security interventions.
  - Furthermore, peacebuilding actors have the potential to facilitate horizontal and vertical dialogue and exchange between tracks three (i.e. refugees, IDPs and migrants; local society), two (i.e. security, humanitarian, development, peacebuilding actors) and track one (i.e. policy makers, politicians).
  - In prolonged displacement, peacebuilding efforts are needed to reduce the likelihood of radicalization, prevent the emergence of new conflicts and violence, and ensure harmonious relationships between and among the host community and refugee, IDP or migrant populations. At the same time, tools such as peace education are key to preparing and enabling refugees, IDPs and migrants to make valuable contributions to peace processes in their countries of origin, when the opportunity arises.
- 
- Return**
- A failure to find solutions to the refugees' plight, exclusion from participation in political processes, and a combination of various psychosocial factors related to conflict-induced migration, can increase the likelihood of migrants, refugees and IDP's, in particular youth, to become radicalized.
  - A failure to include refugee, IDP and migrants' needs, interests and rights into peace processes from the start jeopardizes sustainable peace.
  - The failure to include refugee, IDP and migrants' grievances into dealing with the past processes
- After safe return, peacebuilding measures must not cease. On the contrary, peacebuilding plays a key role in including refugees, IDPs and migrants into peace processes, to increase the effectiveness of dealing with the past and reconciliation processes through their participation and, ultimately, to keep peace (conflict prevention initiatives, early warning, etc.).

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swisspeace is a practice-oriented peace research institute. It analyses the causes of violent conflicts and develops strategies for their peaceful transformation. swisspeace aims to contribute to the improvement of conflict prevention and conflict transformation by producing innovative research, shaping discourses on international peace policy, developing and applying new peacebuilding tools and methodologies, supporting and advising other peace actors, as well as by providing and facilitating spaces for analysis, discussion, critical reflection and learning.

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