



Jesuit Refugee Service position for the High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development

Forcibly displaced and development

1. Though most of the discussion on migration and development has centered on migrants, in general, and the economic aspects of migration, it is necessary to acknowledge that migration is made up of mixed flows. The forcibly displaced form a part of these mixed flows, and when they are taken into account in development planning, they do have a role to play in the reconstruction and peace-building efforts necessary for sustainable development.
2. The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) would like to focus on the link between the forcibly displaced and the potential positive impact that these people could have on the development of the host society and the society to which they return. When development assistance is used to increase the development potential of the forcibly displaced and targeted towards promoting durable solutions, whether these be local integration, voluntary repatriation, or resettlement, these people can become strong agents of development. In reality, however, humanitarian assistance to the forcibly displaced creates dependency when provided in the context of long-term relief and not linked to development. If provided early enough, however, it can instead be used to promote self-reliance and the wider aspect of human development.
3. In order to allow the forcibly displaced an opportunity through which they can realize their full potential and contribute to development, policies which link migration and development must be accompanied by a broad rights-based approach. A broad-rights based approach serves as a means of including the forcibly displaced in development strategies and their potential to contribute to development. Development is an “inalienable right,” as the UN Declaration on the Right to Development states, entailing economic, social, cultural, and political development. A rights-based approach to development necessitates granting forcibly displaced people full economic and social rights,¹ including the right to education, the right to work, the right to engage in self-employment, freedom of movement and the right to participate in decisions affecting all areas of their lives. Policies that protect the rights of forcibly displaced migrants allow them to gain skills and participate in activities which enable them to contribute to the development of the host society and society to which they return.
4. One of the first avenues for a contribution to development available to the forcibly displaced comes through education and vocational training. Such formation is not merely about providing people with basic skills, but also creating an environment in which development can take hold. Education and vocational training can be considered to be among the first tools of protection in a refugee camp and a means conveying important life skills and values. They give people a purpose, and a reason to believe that they have a future. They provide a means of reducing the psychosocial impact of trauma and displacement and allow people to begin to re-establish some sense of normalcy and security after being forced to leave their homes. At the same time they prevent children and adolescents from becoming

¹ UN Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol, and Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

involved in criminal activities and being recruited by rebel forces in war-torn countries. Where vocational activities have been weak and non-existent, teenage pregnancies have risen, alcohol and drug use has been on the rise, and recruitment among rebel armies has been known to increase, leading to a sense of insecurity and instability in the region that impedes development.

5. Education and vocational training can allow forcibly displaced people to participate in the development of their country of origin upon repatriation. They give people the skills necessary to help rebuild the country, obtain a job upon return, continue their education, or perhaps start their own businesses. At the same time, vocational training and education enable people to productively invest in their countries of origin. Vocational training sponsored by JRS has included training in such fields as masonry, carpentry, agriculture, and computer science. In Liberia returnees are now able to put the skills that they have learned in the camps to use by helping to reconstruct the country. Those who have received JRS sponsored vocational training, for example, and earned a diploma, have often been able to find employment and earn a living for themselves and their families, even while economic life in the country of origin remained at a standstill. Others have received financial assistance to pursue various forms of skills training and education. Still others have been able to start their own businesses in such fields as tailoring and hairdressing with training and funds provided by JRS. An educational program sponsored by JRS on the Thai-Burmese border has managed to train not only teachers, but teacher trainers. When there was talk about repatriation, the program was expanded to include training in the administration of educational programs, thus enabling the community to start an educational program upon return.

6. At the same time, education and vocational training for forced migrants can be put to use in camp communities and host communities, thus contributing to local development. In East Africa, where over 90% of teachers have been found to lack training, teacher training remains an important aspect of JRS work. In a place such as Adjumani, Uganda, where JRS remains responsible for the administration of primary and secondary schools in refugee and IDP camps with an attendance averaging over 30,000, students and teachers have benefited from the training. As a result, the Ugandan school system, too, has seen an improvement in the quality of education provided. The teachers continue to benefit from the training after working in the camps, when and if they choose to continue in the profession upon repatriation. Another initiative in East Africa has allowed teachers and medical workers to further their studies through an online university course, while continuing to work in camp communities and sharing the knowledge that they have acquired. Even in industrialized societies, many times forcibly displaced communities are excluded from participating in the economic and social life of the community, because they are not allowed to work or they are denied access to education. They do have the potential to contribute to both local development and development in the country of origin, and this positive role should be recognized.

7. Though the number of internally displaced people IDPs out numbers the number of refugees (7.6 million in the East Africa region where JRS works, as opposed to 2.1 million in the same region), they do not receive the same assistance that refugees receive. Ignored by their own governments and unable to cross an international border, their situation is often much worse than that of the refugees. When they return to their regions of origin, many times they encounter that they have difficulties in accessing their property and that they are excluded from participating the economic life of their country. They are often viewed as a burden to hosting areas. IDPs form a large group, which could potentially contribute to the stabilization and the development of the country, if provided assistance on par with the assistance that is provided to refugees. This could include the extension of rights delineated

in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement including the right to education, the right to work, basic health care, and property rights.

8. Just as it becomes imperative that development assistance be provided to the forcibly displaced, it is equally important that the development needs of communities that host large numbers of forcibly displaced migrants be taken into account. When forcibly displaced communities migrate in search of protection, they are often housed in camps and have better living conditions than those of people in the surrounding community. They have access to basic education and health care, for example, while those in the surrounding community go without. Rather than serving as a catalyst for an increase in tension between the forcibly displaced and the host communities, however, the presence of a large forcibly displaced community can and should serve as an opportunity for the development of the local community. This can include the development of local infrastructures and the local economy. At the same time, it should work to ensure stabilization and security in the region. The inclusion of host communities in development planning could also encourage governments of host communities to move away from policies of strict encampment, thereby contributing to the realization of greater economic and social rights for the forcibly displaced, including the right to education, the right to work, the right to engage in self-employment, and freedom of movement.

9. Equal attention must be given to creating an environment in the countries and regions of origin from whence the forcibly displaced come that will allow sustainable development to occur. The establishment of such an environment is inextricably linked to the question of sustainable return. The forcibly displaced are usually unwilling to return if it is not safe for them to do so, or if they are unsure that their human rights will be respected. When, for example, adolescent girls that enjoyed some degree of protection and education while living in a camp are told that they will face traditional norms and practices upon repatriation, including forced marriages and lack of access to property, return becomes more difficult. Neither are the forcibly displaced willing to return if they feel that they will not be able to provide for themselves or their families, or if they will not have access to basic health care and education, as has been noticed with returnees to Southern Sudan. If a diploma is not recognized in the country of origin, a returnee may also not be able to find employment. If returnees do not perceive the atmosphere within the region of origin as being conducive to their participation in the economic and social life of the community, returns becomes problematic and development retarded.

10. Returnees do have a role to play in the reconstruction of their countries of origin and peace-building efforts. For this to occur, development must be part of a wider scheme to develop economic capacities and basic infrastructure in post-conflict situations. Essential for the success of voluntary repatriation, is that returnees have the skills and the resources to rebuild their livelihoods. The international community must be willing to help to rebuild basic infrastructure in the country, including things such as roads, schools, health clinics, as well as establish the rule of law and law enforcement mechanisms. In post-conflict situations such as Liberia, emphasis is placed on provided vocational training to ex-combatants, while little attention is given to developing agricultural capacities. Short-sighted programs fail to understand that there is no use in getting ex-combatants back to work if the country does not develop a proper infrastructure which could be used to transport goods to market. In Burundi, for example, agriculture has always been the primary means of survival. The scarcity of land and the fact that other livelihoods have not been developed for returnees, prevent the establishment of a completely stable situation inside the country.

11. As a way to ensure that forcibly displaced populations contribute to development, and that host societies and return societies draw upon the potential contribution that these people can make to local development, the Jesuit Refugee Service recommends that the following policy recommendations be put into practice.

Policy Recommendations

- A rights-based approach to managing migration should ensure respect for each individual’s right to development and human rights, specifically economic and social rights. At the same time a rights-based approach should be viewed as a means of enabling people to contribute to development in host societies and return societies.
- Forcibly displaced populations should be included in national development plans, and development assistance to countries should target host areas. The development needs of host communities, as well as return communities, should also be taken into account.
- Development assistance for forcibly displaced populations prepare people for one of the three durable solutions and should include access to education and vocational training that give people the necessary skills to rebuild their livelihoods and communities.
- Earlier and more targeted development assistance to post-conflict areas that would help rebuild infrastructure and ensure that returnees are returning with the necessary skills and resources to rebuild their livelihoods, and thus contribute to the development of the area.

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