



**Jesuit Refugee Service statement for the 2nd annual
Global Forum on Migration and Development**

October 2008

Global migration continues to be hallmarked by so-called “mixed flows.” The reasons and rationales for choosing to migrate vary from one individual or group to the other. In some instances, people flee from armed conflict, political unrest and serious human rights violations in their country of origin. In other instances people flee economic hardship, high levels of unemployment, scarce resources and poor government policies. Yet in other instances people flee from well-founded fears of persecution to apply for refugee protection in another country. In most cases the people in the movements described above travel together. Using the same routes and means of migration, they become easily indistinguishable to authorities in receiving countries.

Within mixed migration flows lies a strand of coherence: migrants seeking to flee an environment from which they felt incapable of living the lives that they value. They flee due to an erosion of social conditions, a lack of rights protection and the overall lack of development in their country of origin. Global and regional political actors, such as the European Union, have tried to address these concerns by using migration for development in countries of origin. Yet these efforts have neglected to sufficiently investigate the root causes described above.

A continued discrepancy within the current governmental and institutional debate is the exclusion of forced migrants from the migration and development agenda. This discrepancy neglects the fundamental coherence between human rights and development: that sustainable development cannot occur until an individual or group has the political, social and economic capacity to live the lives that they value. The rupture of this fundamental coherence lies at the root of why persons are forced to migrate.

The exclusion of forced migrants from the migration and development agenda withholds a potentially important resource for development from both countries of origin and reception. The experiences of JRS in Liberia between 2006 and 2008 concretely demonstrate how forced migrants can contribute to development. In utilising the skills and capacities of refugees returning to Liberia after the civil war’s end, the staff of JRS Liberia, together with local community leaders, were able to harness the development potential of these forced migrants for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of entire communities. Ivorian refugees encamped in Liberia participated in vocational and teacher training projects that prepared them for their eventual return home. Additionally they engaged in reconstruction activities with local Liberians for the benefit of the host communities. Far from being a singular case, JRS’ experiences in Liberia shows how the coherence of rights and development can improve the lives of forced migrants, while benefiting countries of origin and reception.

The Jesuit Refugee Service is a global Catholic organisation founded in 1980, with the mission to accompany, serve and advocate for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons regardless of their religious affiliation. It participated in the preparatory meeting of the High Level Dialogue in the United Nations during September 2006, and it participated in the Civil Society Day of the first Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2007. Together with four other Catholic organisations, the Jesuit Refugee Service organised in May 2007 a conference on migration and development at the European Parliament.

The Jesuit Refugee Service welcomes the opportunity to once again advocate for the forcibly displaced by participating in the Civil Society Days of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. The purpose of our presence will be to inform, to raise awareness and to nourish critical as well as constructive debate on the current global discourse on migration and development, and to advocate for the right of the forcibly displaced to participate in this discourse as an equal stakeholder.

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