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How can Development Policy Help to Tackle the Causes of Flight?

Summary

Europe has been discussing how to deal with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees from the Middle East, Africa and other parts of the world for months now. However, one frequently overlooked aspect is the fact that just a small percentage of the world's approximately 60 million forcibly displaced people actually come to Europe – the number of asylum applications across the entire European Union between 2008 and September 2015 totalled around 3.5 million. Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon and Iran are each accommodating over one million refugees, thus probably more than the European Union to date.

All in all, the number of people forced to leave their homes has never been as high as it was in 2015. Flight is a reaction to threats to people's physical or psychological integrity. The causes of flight include wars, political repression, terrorism, food shortages and natural disasters. What can development policy, including humanitarian aid, do in order to combat these root causes?

In the short term, attempts should be made to create or maintain so-called 'stability cores' – locations in which those who are fleeing receive physical stability and essential material resources (water, food, education, health care services). These spaces may be created in the countries of origin themselves or in host countries in the region. In the process, it is crucial to involve administrative structures within the host countries from the outset, and also to ensure that the host population benefits from the aid provided.

In the medium term, the refugees should be prepared effectively, either for their return to their countries of origin, or for their integration within the host country.

Whatever happens, economic, social and legal prospects must be created for them, in order to avoid apathy and despair – a breeding ground for frustration and violence. At present, larger amounts, increased reliability and longer-term perspectives in terms of funding for humanitarian and transitional aid are urgently required.

Above all, development policy can attenuate the causes of flight preventively, with long-term effects. It is vital to ensure that no other countries, such as Egypt, Pakistan or Nigeria, are plunged into crises (civil war, political repression, etc.), with the result that the number of refugees increases considerably once more. Prerequisites for this are efforts relating not only to the short-term, but also to the long-term stabilisation of these countries. This presupposes not only politically, socio-economically and ecologically sustainable development, but also requires the involvement of large sections of the population in political decision-making processes. Only then can a social and political equilibrium between competing interests within society be achieved. In future, the primacy of short-term political stability via the support of authoritarian governments at the expense of political legitimacy and participation should no longer be accepted. Development policy is equipped with tools designed to promote inclusive social change and the balance of political forces without significantly expanding the financial scope of authoritarian regimes. As a result, crisis prevention and peace promotion must become important focuses of development policy once more. Experiences with 'multidimensional peace-keeping' in post-conflict countries show that concerted international commitment with multilateral leadership is the way forward, even in very challenging circumstances.

The refugee crisis is a global phenomenon

The influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees from war zones and crisis areas has ensured that the global refugee crisis has now reached Europe, and has attracted more attention within the 'old continent' than any other issue in the past 25 years. From a global perspective, however, the refugee crisis is by no means a European one, but, above all, a crisis of the global South, with its roots in crisis areas and economically weak countries. This is where European foreign and development policy is required.

In late 2014, approximately 60 million people worldwide were considered forcibly displaced – almost 1% of the world's population. Of these, 86% were moving between developing countries and developing and emerging countries (as of late 2014). Two thirds of these 60 million people were internally displaced persons, or in short IDPs, who were fleeing within the borders of their country of origin. Until 2015, no European country was among the ten receiving the most refugees worldwide – indeed, these countries were solely developing and emerging ones such as Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and Ethiopia. Lebanon, which has accepted in excess of one million Syrian refugees, who now constitute between a quarter and a fifth of its 4.5 million inhabitants, is particularly affected.

Furthermore, it is frequently overlooked that the Middle East is not the only world region being hit very hard by flight and displacement. Globally, the largest groups of cross-border refugees and internally displaced persons come from Syria and Iraq, with other high numbers from Sudan, Afghanistan, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Over half of those fleeing worldwide are originally from one of these six countries.

In conjunction with other policy areas, development policy can help to harness the causes of flight and displacement. What are the root causes of flight, and what can development policy, including humanitarian aid, do in order to address these effectively?

Flight and migration have different causes

The most important immediate causes of the current refugee crisis are armed conflicts such as the inter-nationalised civil wars in Syria, Afghanistan, the DRC and South Sudan. These result from the interconnection of historical, political, ethnic, religious, economic and social factors. Mono-causal explanations which seek to make the USA's geopolitics or Middle East policy, for example, solely responsible for wars and crises, fall short of the mark. As a general rule, people leave their home countries for a plethora of reasons, and this also applies to the current refugee crises. It is initially important to differentiate between flight and migration and their respective causes.

If we broaden the rather narrow definition stipulated by the Geneva Convention on Refugees (GCR), which is based on persecution, then **flight** is a reaction to a threat to physical or psychological integrity which may be caused by war and civil war, terror, violence, repression, food shortages or natural disasters. In future, climate change is likely to exacerbate flight dynamics in and between countries and regions still further. Major refugee movements usually occur when several causes of flight emerge simultaneously. The fact that increasing numbers of refugees have been fleeing from Syria and Iraq or from camps in Lebanon or Jordan directly to Europe since mid-2015 can be attributed to the poor living conditions in these locations. These conditions are also the result of the chronic underfunding of aid programmes run by UNICEF and the World Food Pro-gramme (WFP) for Syrian refugees in the countries adjacent to Syria and for the IDPs in Syria and Iraq.

Even though the distinction between flight and **migration** is not always explicit, the latter term should be used to describe individuals who deliberately leave their country of origin with the aim of improving their socio-economic living conditions elsewhere. When politics play an active role in the mechanics of migration, positive development effects can be anticipated in both the country of origin and the country, or region, of destination. While the destina-tion countries benefit from factors including new human resources, the countries of origin profit from remittances. The risks of migration include the loss of skilled workers in the countries of origin ('brain drain') or the criminal econo-my fuelled by trafficking organisations which smuggle migrants over international borders.

The following section addresses ways to tackle the causes of flight.

Linking short-term aid with stability and prospects

As far as the current refugee crisis is concerned, it is initially important to focus on two objectives within the field of humanitarian aid:

I.   Enabling internal displacement. Wherever possible, inhabitants of warring states and fragile, failing or failed states (Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Palestine, Somalia, etc.) should no longer have to flee from their countries of origin.

II. Improved organisation of and provision for refugee placement. Refugees accommodated by a neighbour-ing host country (Turkey, Lebanon, Pakistan, Ethiopia, etc.) should be able to live with dignity in political, socio-economic and cultural terms, so that they have no grounds to leave their host country again and migrate further, usually on dangerous routes.

In order to achieve these two objectives, so-called 'stability cores' must be created and maintained – both in the country of origin and in the host country. These 'cores' are locations in which the physical survival of individuals and the provision of essential resources (food, health care services, psychological care and education) are assured. As a result, measures are required which offer people in these locations protection from attacks, maintain or restore transport and

communication infrastructures for their provision with food and care services and guarantee humanitarian aid. Simultaneously, the stability of these 'cores' should act as a political and social 'model' and positively influence the already failed societies, e.g. as a counter-model to the 'Islamic State'.

The success of appropriate strategies depends on the handling of several risks. In the countries of origin, there is (1) the danger of cooperating with the 'wrong' players during the strategies' implementation, i.e. those which are themselves responsible for flight and displacement through terror or repression. This can lead to the political upgrading of 'illegitimate' parties and regimes, which, in turn, can trigger future conflicts.

Furthermore, the state and municipal structures prevailing in the regional host countries may (2) be overwhelmed and buckle under the strain. In addition, there exists a risk of conflicts (3) in the host countries between indigenous population groups and those received in the wake of their flight or displacement.

The first risk in the countries of origin can be mitigated when the aforementioned measures are implemented in close cooperation with multilateral institutions (WFP, UNICEF, HABITAT), as these are usually perceived as being neutral and are able to come to arrangements with the majority of conflicting parties, or via civil society organisations with links to the target groups at which the measures are aimed.

The second risk in the regional environs can be limited by ensuring that the local administrative structures within the host countries are included in the planning and implementation of measures designed to support refugees and displaced persons from the outset (as is currently the intention in the case of IDPs in South Sudan). This can help to guarantee that the aid will simultaneously be used to expand the technical, personnel and financial capacities of the local authorities. From the perspective of development policy, it is important that this approach is underpinned by a medium- to long-term financial commitment to the host communities and countries. The measures funded by external players should not only benefit the refugees, but also the indigenous population in the host countries, and this from the outset, a tactic which also mitigates the third risk. This also means ensuring that infrastructure originally created for refugees remains of use to the host country after the refugees have returned to their home countries – for purposes such as building a new town or city for the host country's growing population. Today, refugee camps are usually planned as short-term interim solutions, but frequently become permanent fixtures, a fact noted by the UNHCR for many years now. As far as the current crisis is concerned, the international community should set the right course for the future and avoid acknowledged undesirable developments.

Measures designed to integrate refugees and displaced persons within societies and administrative structures should not cement their status by creating dependency on external support. On the contrary, refugees should receive effective social, economic and political preparation for the return to their countries of origin and for the reconstruction which must take place there. In the event that this is not possible for the foreseeable future, host countries and refugees must adjust to the process of integration. Either way, it is imperative to create economic, social and legal opportunities for the refugees. Children must attend school, the potential offered by teachers, doctors, engineers and other skilled professionals among the refugees must be harnessed, and, finally, social cohesion among the refugees must be promoted. The latter requires, for example, democratic self-governance in the refugee camps, as has been achieved to some extent in recent years by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees in the Near East. Similar suggestions regarding structural improvements to the support offered to refugees have long been called for by the UNHCR and other organisations, but the international community has taken no heed of this to date. Let us hope that it is now possible to change this.

After all, it would provide a rapid solution to one of the main challenges faced by international civilian crisis management. The funding of the required measures by the international donor community falls below the required levels on a regular basis. In December 2015, for example, the funds actually provided are also well below the requirements forecast by host countries and UN organisations. Additionally, the financial commitments are usually made for overly short periods – for a maximum of one year in the case of humanitarian aid. Larger amounts, increased reliability and longer-term perspectives in terms of funding for crisis management are urgently required – not just in the case of the current centres of conflict in the Middle East.

This is because, with each new crisis, the older, more persistent crises fall into oblivion, and 'blind spots' for possible future crises develop. At present, there is a risk that the high levels of media exposure currently devoted to Syria and its neighbouring countries will lead to the neglect of other crisis-stricken countries, including Yemen and Libya, and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa like Eritrea, Sudan, Mali, Nigeria and the Central African Republic.

Development policy can have long-term effects...

Development policy measures can primarily help to harness the causes of flight in the medium to long term. On the one hand, they can improve the likelihood of the refugees' return to their countries of origin. In Syria, for example, secure ('pacified') zones were supported via strategies designed to rebuild infrastructure and strengthen local authorities. After the conflicts have ended, immediate

support for the creation of state structures must be provided.

In preventive terms, development policy can, on the other hand, help to ensure that no further countries are plunged into crises (civil war, political repression, economic crises, etc.), which drive people to flee. This could occur, for example, if another densely populated state in the Middle East (e.g. Egypt), in South Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan) or in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ethiopia, Nigeria) were to fail.

To prevent this from happening, the reorientation of the development policies pursued by Western donor countries is required in order to facilitate the long-term, sustainable stabilisation of their partner countries and the greater involvement of rising powers such as China.

... but must be geared towards sustainable stabilisation already today

Development policy must, particularly in fragile states, be designed to counter the causes of conflict and to promote peaceful conflict resolution. A central goal must be the achievement of a socio-economic and political balance between competing interests. This may include providing partner countries with support in overcoming youth unemployment, low economic productivity, food insecurity, ecological degradation or climate change. However, it is essential to ensure that the solutions to these problems are sought via transparent, participative processes.

In order to achieve this, crisis prevention and peace promotion, combined with the furtherance of improved, democratic governance, must once again become key focuses of development cooperation. Although the number of crisis-stricken countries has risen again significantly in recent years, Germany has reduced the number of partner countries with which it cooperates primarily in terms of crisis prevention and peace promotion to just two. Substantial additional resources which could be considered for requirements including broad-based infrastructure could create the necessary incentives for partner governments to accept what are frequently felt to be rather unwelcome priorities.

Experiences with 'multi-dimensional peacekeeping' in post-conflict countries (e.g. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Lebanon) also show that concerted international commitment with multilateral leadership is the way forward, even in the most challenging of circumstances. With the support of multilateral aid, this insight should be applied more consistently to crisis prevention and peace promotion, in addition to development cooperation with crisis-stricken countries as a whole.

Democratisation must constitute an element of crisis prevention approaches if stability is to be promoted. Where participative, transparent mechanisms for the reconciliation of interests are lacking, many lesser causes of conflict can suddenly trigger the collapse of the entire political system, as in Syria. If economic collaborations with countries under authoritarian rule such as Egypt, Ethiopia or Rwanda are pursued, this should be coupled with greater efforts to promote democratic reform. During collaborations with these countries, it is important to manage the conflict of interest between short-term political stability on the one hand and political legitimacy, transparency and participation on the other strategically. The latter should be given priority in cases of doubt. Authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa were supported by Western donors for the purpose of short-term stabilisation for far too long, until several of them imploded in 2011. Today, donors still support numerous autocracies in Sub-Saharan Africa and, once more, those in North Africa. Cooperation with authoritarian states usually only succeeds in paving the way to more inclusive development if important donors coordinate their initiatives in a single direction. The EU and its member states should, at least, follow this principle.

Here, the overriding aim must be to promote reforms which improve the welfare of citizens in a social, economic, ecological, societal and political respect, without overly expanding the financial leeway of the ruling regime. Accordingly, the focus should be placed on the improvement of suitable soft skills (e.g. training), instead of on hardware (e.g. physical infrastructure).

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