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Good Governance, Good Jobs, and a Good Global Compact on Migration

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Good Governance, Good Jobs, and a Good Global Compact on Migration

Bonn, 3 July 2017. The Global Forum on Migration and Development summit meeting in Berlin showed that global leaders are increasingly focusing on the role of development aid and technical cooperation in stemming the migration crisis. As the enormous flow of migrants and refugees from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia continues, development cooperation will be crucial for providing people with quality livelihoods in their home countries, while creating opportunities for safe, legal migration. This follows the recent United Nations meeting in Geneva to continue preparations for negotiating the Global Compact on Migration. At these events governments recognized the importance of development as a means to mitigate high-risk migration and flight, but development solutions will need to go beyond short-term job creation and bilateral labour migration programmes, and address the political and social issues that force people to leave their home countries.

Forced migration, due to conflict, environmental change, and a lack of economic opportunity in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia is an especially challenging issue. If the last 5-7 years have demonstrated anything, it is that people will accept mortal risk to migrate or seek asylum. Thus, aggressive border controls and policies aimed at deterring asylum seekers and migrants are not going to stop someone who has decided (or been coerced) to take the risk of crossing the Mediterranean or Aegean Sea. Development policy must focus on supporting livelihoods, and improving the social and political factors that make a good quality of life possible in someone's home country, since just keeping people 'in place' is not realistic. But what does this look like in practice?

In Ethiopia, a country with a growing manufacturing sector, many expected people to move from agriculture and informal labour into more formal working situations. To the surprise of researchers, Ethiopian workers were likely to quickly return to agriculture and informal labour, where they could earn nearly the same income while working fewer hours in safer conditions. The evidence indicates that for people to benefit from formal employment, development aid and technical cooperation agencies need to work with governments to support safe working conditions and employee rights. In Ethiopia this also means navigating issues of political inclusion, since ethnic identity is such an important factor in Ethiopian governance. If equality of access to labour pro-

tection is not guaranteed people will migrate, potentially accepting the risks of working with traffickers while seeking opportunities that may offer better pay and safety.

Countries recovering from conflict present an even greater challenge. University of Chicago professor Christopher Blattman and the International Rescue Committee's Jeannie Annan conducted research on how agricultural training and access to capital influence labour decisions among former fighters in the West African country of Liberia. The main reason former fighters stayed in the formal economy was the expectation of receiving capital. As Liberia continues to recover from multiple civil wars, developing a labour market and job opportunities is not only necessary for continued peace, but also for providing people with the opportunity to stay and live a quality life. To achieve this though, development agencies working on migration have to think beyond the "jobs, jobs, jobs" mantra. A highly fragile state such as Liberia needs investment in formal payment systems, insurance policies, and most importantly the social and political inclusion that supports continued peace. For example, development agencies must avoid the trap of only helping former fighters, while failing to help displaced non-combatants. Without both technical development and socio-political inclusion, people will remain trapped in tenuous labour and social situations that force constant migration, facing extraordinary risks with each move.

Development aid and technical cooperation will play an increasing role in supporting safe migration and curtailing forced displacement. The risk is that governments and the UN will end up viewing aid as a way to keep people in place, or narrowly focus on short-term jobs programs. The evidence tells us this approach not only does not work, but it puts vulnerable people at greater risk. Policies focusing on workplace safety and labour protections, and complementary support for good governance and social cohesion, will be crucial for developing mutually beneficial legal migration patterns to and from countries in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Investing development and aid resources in quality livelihoods and political inclusion for those who might otherwise be forced from their home countries will be paramount if the ambitious Global Compact on Migration is to succeed.