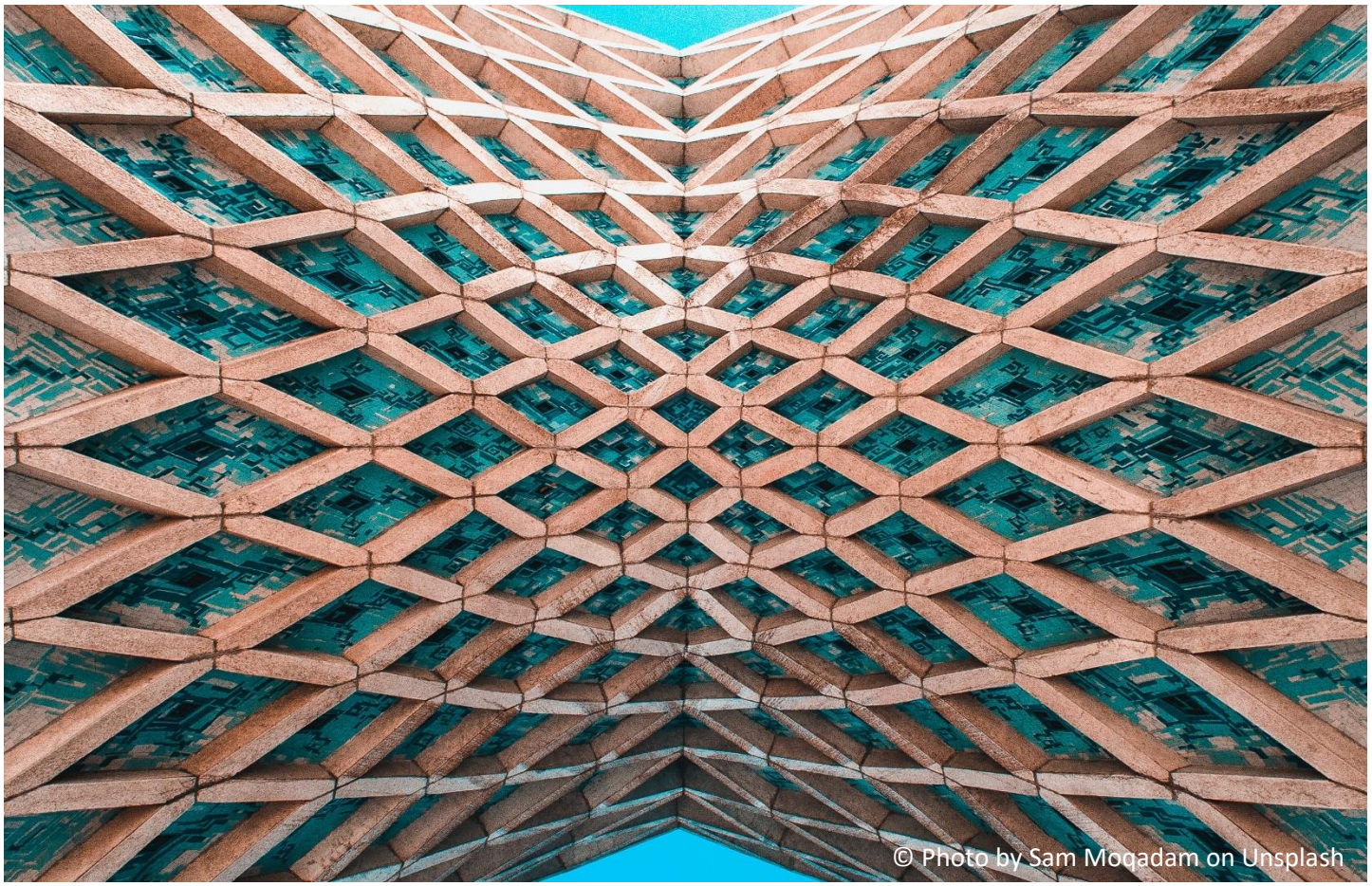

T7 Task Force International cooperation for the global common good

POLICY BRIEF

PEOPLE FIRST: NEW SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGE OF DISPLACEMENT

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Think7

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Abstract

More than 82 million people – equal to the population of Germany – are forcibly displaced across the globe. An increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons are living in long-term situations of vulnerability, dependency, and legal insecurity. This is despite the fact that every displaced person has the capacity and resources to build a new future in displacement but is rarely given the chance to do so by current aid, development, and migration policies. This policy brief makes the case for a paradigm shift towards a people-centred approach to displacement policy that 1) considers the human capital and social networks of displaced people and 2) enables them to use and further develop their potential, including through mobility. As the world's most powerful countries, the G7 are well positioned to play a game-changing role in reducing the scale of global displacement by:

- **leading global cooperation on displacement;**
- **promoting displaced people's professional expertise so they can make better use of their skills;**
- **strengthening human capital by promoting education and apprenticeship opportunities;**
- **leveraging the power of family networks so that its easier for them to support one another; and**
- **scaling up support for the most vulnerable individuals.**

Challenge

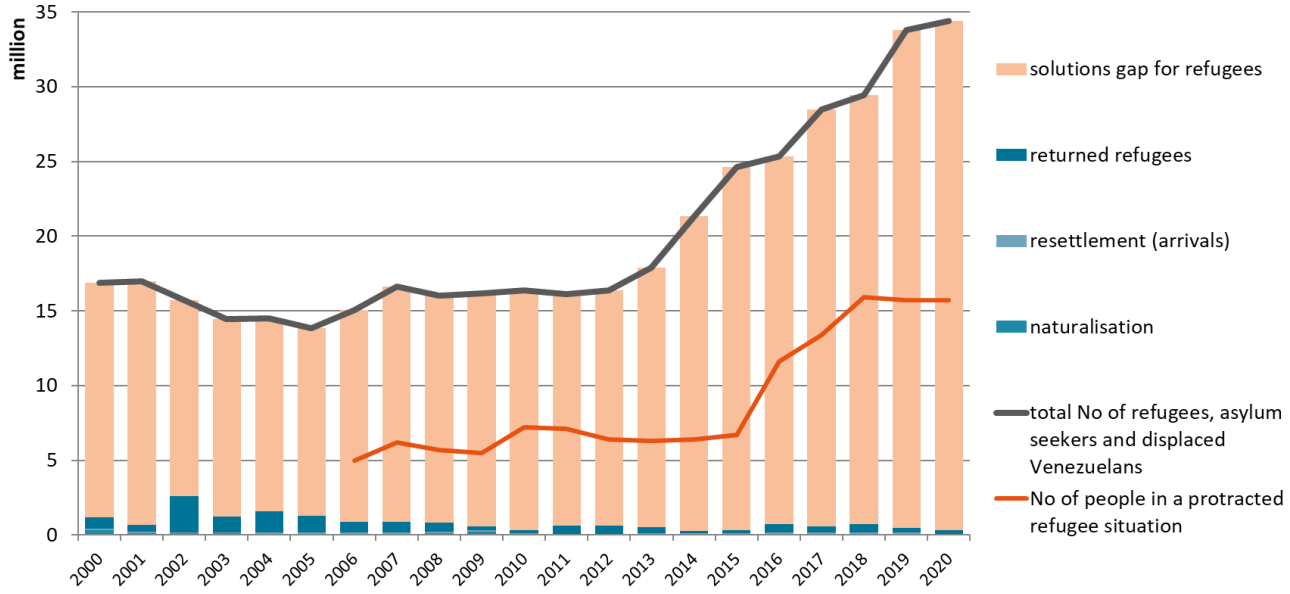
Displacement is undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges facing the world today. The recent outbreak of war in Ukraine adds another dramatic chapter to the global history of displacement, with over 5.1 million people fleeing across borders in the two months of the conflict alone.[1] Globally, more than 82 million people – equal to Germany's population – are forcibly displaced according to statistics from the end of 2020,[2] the majority of whom (48 million) remain in countries of origin.

An increasing number of internally displaced persons and refugees live in long-term situations of vulnerability, dependency, and legal insecurity. The number of people caught in such *protracted displacement situations*[3] has grown because voluntary return, local integration, and resettlement – conventionally considered as 'durable solutions' to displacement – have proven elusive for most displaced people:[4]

- Ongoing conflicts and persecution prevent most refugees from returning home. For example, only 0.7% of all refugees were able to *return* to their origin country in 2020.
- *Local integration* in host states – predominantly developing countries – remains difficult due to refugees' insecure legal status, lack of support, social exclusion, and economic marginalisation. Just a fraction (0.1%) of refugees obtained permanent citizenship in 2020.
- The international community *resettled* just 34,400 persons (0.1% of all refugees) to other countries in 2020. While partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the lowest number in 40 years.

These statistics show that current policies and practices are insufficient for resolving displacement – and the gap between needed and available solutions is only widening (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Gap between global displacement and available solutions for refugees



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In December 2018, the United Nations adopted two decisive resolutions to improve the international community's response to challenges associated with both displacement and migration: the Global Compact on Refugees[5] and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration[6]. With their signatures, the

G7 states committed themselves to reducing the vulnerabilities of refugees and other migrants; working towards fair and equitable responsibility-sharing among states; enhancing access to safe and regular migration; and providing complementary pathways to protection, to name just a few of the two compacts' goals.

The G7 must live up to its promises and take on a powerful leadership role to address global displacement. Since the 2016 Summit in Japan, G7 states have regularly promised to tackle emerging migration crises and respond to long-lasting displacement situations by enhancing aid and assistance to receiving states, scaling up resettlement, and enabling refugees a safe and voluntary return, where practical.[7] However, current policies largely hinder refugees' onward movements to third countries – and to G7 states in particular. Immigration restrictions undermine refugees' own efforts to find solutions and limit the international community's range of responses to displacement.[8] States thereby widely ignore the opportunities inherent in cross-border movements, for instance considering ongoing demographic changes and persisting labour shortages in G7 countries.

The displacement crisis unfolding due to the war in Ukraine has spurred a quick response from the international community, particularly the European Union and its Member States. The activation of the Temporary Protection Directive by the Council of the European Union marks a turning point in refugee protection in Europe. Under this directive, people displaced by the war in Ukraine are not only allowed to legally enter the EU, but they are also collectively granted temporary protection. They receive access to health care, education, and the labour market. Also important, they are free to choose in which EU Member State they want to live, enabling many to link up with personal connections already in the EU.[9] This de facto 'free choice' model stands in contrast to the usual EU asylum policy, which prevents the mobility of asylum seekers and refugees from one EU Member State to another.[10] The long-term political, social, and economic implications of activating this directive cannot yet be assessed. However, this approach shows that it is possible to activate solutions offering immediate access to services, work and mobility (in this case within the EU) when there is political will.

Proposals

Conventional perspectives on protracted displacement centre on the priorities and capacities of states to offer solutions *for* displaced people. But to transform displacement, a paradigm shift is needed that enables more refugees to find the solutions that match *their* needs and aspirations. Human rights and protection must be guaranteed, but states' responsibilities do not end there. Long-term prospects and inclusion based on peoples' skills and resources must be the focus from the very beginning. Their networks should be acknowledged as part of the solution – and policies should enable them to make use of their capacities and networks, including through mobility.

Networks of support

Just like everyone else, displaced people are embedded in a wide range of network relations. Ignoring their social capital gives an incomplete picture of displacement and limits the range of solutions. Indeed, networks exist on several levels:

- *Local networks at the place of living* are essential for finding information, accessing services, landing a job, and developing a sense of belonging.
- *Networks across different places in the country of living* are vital resources for moving out of camps, restarting anew in a foreign environment, or accessing work in another city.
- *Transnational networks stretching across borders* provide important forms of financial, emotional, and logistical support, including information and remittances.

Despite their importance, displaced persons' networks are often overlooked in protection strategies and humanitarian aid for IDPs and refugees.[11] A recent survey we conducted shows that 42 per cent of people in long-term displacement situations maintain connections with people in other countries, yet with substantial variations between sites: 10 per cent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 12 per cent in Pakistan, but 35 per cent in Ethiopia and even 59 per cent in Jordan.[12]

Family networks are the most important source of support for displaced people. Remittances from family members help them pay for costs of living, education, or health services. Relatives also facilitate migration through family reunification, humanitarian admission or private sponsorship initiatives when possible. To better address displacement, policies should support such initiatives, create leaner family reunification processes,[13] and facilitate the transfer of remittances.

Professional contacts foster cooperation between displaced people and members of host communities and provide the base for local livelihoods. Professional networks can be leveraged locally through dedicated programmes and amplified through IT solutions. They can also pave the way to labour mobility if a secured job opportunity in a third country is linked with the right to move there legally, for instance, by removing some of the legal barriers to refugees' mobility.

Education and work experience are essential for sustainably improving displaced peoples' job prospects. Leveraging educational pathways, facilitating apprenticeships, or providing opportunities to gain professional experience through short-term working opportunities are just some examples to tap into – and are an area where **institutions** can step in to facilitate connectivity and mobility.[14]

Building solutions based on displaced peoples' capacities and networks

Displaced people have a variety of skills and experience that they can use to rebuild their lives after displacement. Their human, social, and financial capital are diverse – in quantitative and qualitative terms.

This capital can be monetary, intellectual, or technical. It also includes networks of families, friends, or business partners back home or abroad. Policymakers often ignore these valuable resources. In many cases, policies even hinder refugees from using their resources, particularly by restricting their mobility, and this is counterproductive.

The level of human and social capital shapes the type of support displaced people require (see Figure 2):

- Those who lack the financial means or human or social capital to find a solution on their own are the most vulnerable and at risk of becoming stuck in long-lasting displacement situations. This group needs the most intensive support, for instance through humanitarian aid, integration assistance, or refugee resettlement.
- Those with more resources might benefit from targeted assistance that leverages their networks and utilises their skills to find a sustainable solution, such as finding a job or launching a business locally, or legally migrating to another country to work, study, or reunite with family members.
- Those with strong human, social, and financial resources often do not require any support. They may not even enter international protection regimes, as reflected in data comparing permits for family, work, or study reasons with refugee resettlement and asylum in OECD countries.[15]

Solutions built on displaced peoples' own priorities, capacities, and networks should complement conventional approaches. Simply put, such an approach can lead to more and better results for the people and countries concerned.

Figure 2: A correlation between networks, capital, and solutions to displacement

Implementation

It is not only the scale of global displacement but also the inherent potential of displaced people that underscores the need for expanding the range of possible solutions. These solutions, whether in countries of origin, neighbouring countries, or countries farther afield like the G7, should start from displaced people's human and social capital. This entails 1) recognising their aspirations, knowledge, skills, and networks and 2) supporting them in making use of and developing these resources further.

G7 policymakers can scale up solutions to displacement by:

Leading global cooperation on displacement.

- G7 states must firmly commit themselves to the inalienable human rights of all displaced people and the fundamental principles enshrined in international protection conventions and, therefore, immediately halt all practices violating these conventions.
- Accelerate implementation of the two Global Compacts, which acknowledge people's freedoms, capacities, and potentials to contribute to host societies. G7 countries should take the lead in enhancing cooperation and coordination amongst stakeholders to realise sustainable and long-term solutions, to provide complementary pathways to protection, and to enable safe, orderly, and regular migration.

Promoting displaced peoples' professional expertise so they can make better use of their skills.

- Set up systems or further promote existing schemes that allow for the assessment and recognition of refugees' skills. Understand professional experiences and training as assets for displaced people, as they are the very basis to earn a living, rebuild their lives, and seek long-term solutions.
- Make the skills of displaced people visible and accessible to employers at the local, national, and international level. Databases through which displaced people and employers can be matched should be developed and further promoted.
- Allow for national and international mobility so that displaced people with needed skills can follow available job opportunities.

Strengthening human capital by promoting education and apprenticeship opportunities.

- Offer more education opportunities for displaced people to start, continue, or complete their studies or training. G7 countries should support first countries of asylum to improve in-person and digital education, while also increasing migration opportunities for higher education and training.
- Investigate the potential for apprenticeships in G7 countries that can further help to develop professional expertise.

Leveraging the power of family networks by making it easier for them to support one another.

- Acknowledge the importance of remittances for livelihoods and well-being, reduce transfer costs, and link them to other modes of support to, for example, launch businesses.
- Understand family networks as driving forces for mobility and integration. Policymakers should allow for extended family reunification (e.g. by broadening the definition of family), speed up processes, and create additional legal migration pathways through humanitarian admission and

private/community sponsorship. This will demonstrate solidarity with host states and reduce the need for displaced people to resort to irregular journeys to reunite.

Scaling up support for the most vulnerable among the displaced people.

- Show solidarity with major host countries by providing substantial financial, technical, and political support. Humanitarian aid must be linked with long-term development planning and be in line with existing regional protection mechanisms such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and Regional Refugee Response Plans (3RP).[16]
- Substantially expand access to resettlement to provide long-term prospects for more refugees. G7 countries should also adopt quota systems to offer stability and enable long-term planning for resettlement programmes.

Solutions to protracted displacement are often lacking and not tailored to individuals' needs and experiences. Tailoring support according to IDPs' and refugees' aspirations, (potential) skills, and resources – including any lack thereof – opens new doors for displaced people to become self-reliant. Receiving countries should enable displaced people to make use of their own capacities, putting people at the heart of the search for solutions.

The G7 is well suited to play a powerful leadership role by adopting such an approach in their humanitarian and development aid as well as their migration, protection, and integration policies. A proactive and people-centred strategy for addressing displacement reinforces the G7's role as a bridge-builder and mediator for peace and security, amplifies a transformative agenda towards crises and global challenges, and strengthens anticipatory humanitarian assistance to avoid emerging humanitarian crises from becoming protracted.

Endnotes

[1] According to the UNHCR, 5,133,747 people fled across borders to neighbouring and other EU countries within the first eight weeks of the war (http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine, updated April 21, 2022). In addition, 7.7 million persons were internally displaced in the country (https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/92200, updated April 21, 2022).

[2] UNHCR. (2021). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020*. https://www.unhcr.org/60b638e37/unhcr-global-trends-2020

[3] Protracted displacement situations are long-lasting displacement crises, in which displaced people lack, or are actively denied, opportunities to rebuild their lives – even years after they had initially fled. See: Etzold, B. et al. (2019). *Transnational Figurations of Displacement: Conceptualising protracted displacement and translocal connectivity through a process-oriented perspective* (TRAFIG Working Paper No. 1). https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5840818

[4] Data on durable solutions taken from UNHCR. (2021). Refugee Data Finder. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=V53liX

[5] Global Compact on Refugees (A/73/12 [Part II]), December 17, 2018, https://www.unhcr.org/5c658aed4

[6] Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195), December 19, 2018, https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/195

[7] Barnett, S. (2017): *G7/8 Governance of Migration, 1975-2016*. University of Toronto, G7 Research Group. http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/evaluations/migration-governance-1975-16.html

[8] For an analysis of the governance of displacement situations, see Ferreira, N. et al. (2020). *Governing protracted displacement. An analysis across global, regional and domestic contexts*. TRAFIG Working Paper No. 03. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5841848

[9] Wagner, M. (2022). *The war in Ukraine and the renaissance of temporary protection - why this might be the only way to go*. ICMPD Policy Insights. 02.03.2022. https://www.icmpd.org/blog/2022/the-war-in-ukraine-and-the-renaissance-of-temporary-protection-why-this-might-be-the-only-way-to-go; Thym, D. (2022). *Temporary Protection for Ukrainians: the Unexpected Renaissance of 'Free Choice'*. EU Immigration and Asylum Law Blog. 07.03.2022. https://eumigrationlawblog.eu/temporary-protection-for-ukrainians-the-unexpected-renaissance-of-free-choice/

[10] Katsiaficas, C. et al. (2021). *Moving on. How easing mobility restrictions within Europe can help forced migrants rebuild their lives*. TRAFIG Policy Brief no. 6. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5845992

[11] This has become evident in our research in Ethiopia (Adugna Tufa, F. et al. (2021). *Figurations of Displacement in and beyond Ethiopia*. TRAFIG Working Paper no. 05. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5841864), Jordan (Tobin, S. et al. (2021). *Figurations of Displacement in and beyond Jordan*. TRAFIG Working Paper no. 6. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5841870), and Pakistan (Mielke, K. et al. (2021). *Figurations of Displacement in and beyond Pakistan*. TRAFIG Working Paper no. 07. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5841876)

[12] Survey conducted with 1897 displaced persons in DR Congo, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Jordan, Greece and Italy. Results will be published in the TRAFIG synthesis report on https://trafig.eu

[13] Katsiaficas, C. & Wagner, M. (2021). *Connecting the dots: Understanding community sponsorship as a network*. International Centre for Migration Policy Development. https://www.icmpd.org/blog/2021/connecting-the-dots-understanding-community-sponsorship-as-a-network; Etzold, Benjamin, and Simone Christ. 2021. Humanitarian Admission Programmes: how networks enable mobility in contexts of protracted displacement. *Forced Migration Review* (68): 63–66. https://www.fmreview.org/externalisation/etzold-christ

[14] Katsiaficas, C. (2021). *Investing in refugee talent*. ICMPD Policy Insights. https://www.icmpd.org/blog/2021/tapping-into-global-talent-investing-in-refugee-talent

[15] OECD & UNHCR. (2021). *Safe pathways for refugees II - OECD-UNHCR study on third-country solutions for refugees: Admissions for family reunification, education, and employment purposes between 2010 and 2019*. https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/UNHCR%20Safe%20Pathways%20for%20Refugees%20II%20Web-version001.pdf; Wagner, M. & Katsiaficas, C. (2021). *Networks and mobility: A case for complementary pathways*. TRAFIG policy brief no. 3. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5845978

[16] The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) has been tested in several regions and is now firmly established through the Global Compact on Refugees (UN 2018), while the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) is a regional strategy in response to the Syrian crisis that serves as the blueprint for humanitarian and development action for refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (3RP. 2022. Regional Strategic Overview. https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/RSO2022.pdf

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