

World Disaster Report 2012: forced migration and displacement
18th October 2012, 12:30-14:00pm, Public Event, London

Chair: David Peppiatt – International Director of the British Red Cross

Speakers:

- Professor Roger Zetter - University of Oxford, Editor of World Disasters Report 2012
- Dr Sara Pantuliano - Head of the Humanitarian Policy Group
- Dr Nando Sigona – Senior Research Officer, Refugee Studies Centre, contributor to the World Disaster Report

Introduction

David Peppiatt began with an introduction of the report “[World Disaster Report 2012 – Focus on forced migration and displacement](#)”. David highlighted key statistics on this issue, emphasising that there are 72 million forced migrants, 20 million of whom are trapped in a “state of protracted displacement”, and that there are more people displaced in their own countries than there are refugees in the world. The back of the report also contain very useful information from the CRED and EM-DAT databases, which have gathered disaster data since the 1900s.

David Peppiatt expressed that the report investigates the many different forms of vulnerability, impacts on host communities and the drivers, capacities and strategies of the forcibly displaced. This issue is one of international concern; during November 2011 the entire Red Cross/Red Crescent movement gathered with 164 leaders and governments where the delegates and leaders of the movement recognized the alarming humanitarian situation of migrants at all stages of their journey.

David stressed that forced migration and displacement are defining characteristics of nearly all of the current humanitarian crises – DRC, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Haiti, and Pakistan. He also noted that the report finds that nearly 4/5ths of forced migrants are hosted in developing countries; many of those fleeing conflict or violence can find themselves in almost equally unstable conditions.

Professor Roger Zetter

Professor Zetter gave an overview of the report. He discussed different drivers of displacement, including protracted crises, land grabbing and leasing, and climate change. He emphasized that the issue of forced displacement and migration is significant not only due to the numbers of those affected but also the great human cost. He stressed the importance of supporting the resilience and dignity of those displaced.

The report takes a broad perspective towards forced migration that goes beyond the idea that only refugees are forcibly displaced; the report puts the number of forcibly displaced at 73 million – the equivalent to the population of Turkey or the DRC. These numbers include 43 million displaced through conflict, violence and political upheaval, 15 million through natural or technological disasters and a further 15 million displaced as a direct result of development activities. Professor Zetter did however note that it is difficult to get

comprehensive data on development driven forced displacement, but nevertheless is a significant displacement phenomenon.

Professor Zetter then gave a brief overview of the seven chapters in the report:

1) The humanitarian challenge: the dynamics of displacement and response

- Four challenges to humanitarian action:
 - Unpredictable causes
 - This creates a problem for effective preparedness interventions.
 - Multiple-drivers
 - Problems can be compounded through multiple drivers. For example in the Horn of Africa protracted violence caused vulnerability which, compounded with food shortages due to drought, led to a large flow of refugees. The overlap of different drivers and challenges creates a demanding environment for humanitarian actors.
 - 20 million in prolonged displacement
 - This is not necessarily a negative situation as those in protracted displacement can develop new social networks, economic livelihoods etc. However, it is still a challenge for humanitarian actors to find the right modalities of assistance and support.
 - Growing resistance of politicians and citizens to refugees
 - There is a pervasive anti-migrant and anti-immigrant sentiment. The report provides discussion of how donors can provide better support for vulnerable populations in host countries.

2) Vulnerability and protection: reducing risk and promoting security for forced migrants

- Increasing complexity and unpredictability of violence and conflict means that those displaced face increased vulnerability. These conditions diminish the scope for protection.
- Livelihood support is crucial to reducing vulnerability.
- Community-based protection should be investigated as a type of intervention. A successful example of this was seen in IFRC's efforts to provide safe spaces in Haiti.

3) Health on the move: the impact of forced displacement on health

- Forced displacement triggers major public health challenges, accentuating existing vulnerabilities and undermining the key resources needed to sustain good health such as disease control and the coordination of preventive and curative health provision. The consequences can persist for years within forced migrant communities.
- Responding to the diverse health needs of forced migrants requires enhanced professional standards alongside the mainstreaming of refugee health care into national health services in those countries.
- Refugee camps constitute a particular risk for health, but it is also important that refugees in urban areas are not excluded from health care.
- The report also highlights reproductive, maternal and child health as strategic and operational priorities as well as issues of mental health and ageing diseases.

4) Urbanisation of forced displacement

- The majority of communities forcibly displaced by disasters and conflict are fleeing to cities, not camps.

- Intra-urban violence, such as post-election violence in Kenya or drug cartels and gangs, needs to be factored into humanitarian response to improve security and protection.
- Economic activity needs to be promoted as should partnering with municipalities and the private sector.
- Additionally, many of the areas where the displaced settle are areas already in protracted conditions in need of economic and livelihood support.

5) Development and forced displacement

- Development projects are a major cause of forced displacement but has largely gone off the agenda even though those affected are mostly poor and vulnerable with little power to protect their rights.
- While there are well developed resettlement strategies, many end up more impoverished and vulnerable than before.
- There needs to be a call to donors to take more active responsibility in safeguarding the welfare and livelihoods of those affected as well protecting the rights of those resettled.

6) Costs and impact of forced displacement

- Average humanitarian budget dedicated to the forcibly displaced is US\$8.4 billion per annum; this doesn't include funding to host countries or mainstream donations to NGOs.
- There is a need to minimize well known negative economic impacts on public sector budgets and maximize productive opportunities which refugees and IDPs can provide.
- Greater synergy between humanitarian and development actors can promote policies that capitalize on economic potential, and better integrate refugees and IDPs into the local economy. The report argues that sustainable solutions occur when humanitarian interventions meet development agendas.

7) Unlocking protracted displacement

- Almost 70% of refugees- 7 million refugees and 13 million IDPs live in protracted displacement, e.g. in Iraq, DRC and Columbia.
- Solving protracted displacement is not impossible but need to develop new political will and innovative approaches that offer economic sustainability, and ensure the right to work, freedom of movement etc.

Sara Pantuliano

Dr Pantuliano's presentation focused on urban displacement, something she observed is slightly hidden in humanitarian discourse. In the eyes of the public and some agencies, displacement can be perceived as a rural or camp based experience, but this is not often the case.

Dr Pantuliano stressed that urban displacement is increasing. In the past decade, cities have absorbed a large amount of displacement, such as cities and towns in Sudan, Haiti, Yemen, Kenya. She gave the example of Kabul which in 2001 had a population of just 1 million but by 2010 had 4.5 million inhabitants – partly due to the return of refugees but also due to IDPs fleeing insecurity in the countryside. Urban displacement is also not just concentrated in the capitals but also secondary cities, such as Santa Marta in Columbia – a city that has the largest IDP population in the world.

Dr Pantuliano reiterated that the causes of displacement are manifold and sometimes overlapping – disasters, conflict, violence, land grabbing, development projects and rural poverty. There are also a range of motivations that compel people to move specifically to urban centers rather than camps: security, economic opportunities, greater access to social/welfare services, proximity to powerbrokers, access to assistance, and anonymity.

In many of the cities conditions may be more difficult but often there is the perception that there are more opportunities than in rural areas. The most vulnerable displaced people end up facing barriers in accessing land and property, and are often forced to settle on the outskirts of cities on low-value, poorly serviced land. These areas are often crowded and in unsafe locations, e.g. on hillsides with flimsy shelters. There are higher risks of disease due to poor water and sanitation. These areas may also experience high crime rates; displaced youths can also be more vulnerable to recruitment into gangs or crime networks due to a longing for a sense of belonging and community. Many may not have official documents and can face arrests and harassment by the police. Local residents also see these populations as outsiders and competitors for limited jobs, shelter and services.

However, Dr Pantuliano noted that host communities can benefit from the presence of displaced communities, for example by renting land/accommodation to them or seeing increased economic activity from the enterprises or assets the displaced bring with them.

But there are too many institutional obstacles to realising economic potential. These are often a result of policies put in place by local and national authorities. Authorities control resources and long-term planning so without their support there can be little progress and little sustainability. Dr Pantuliano stated that many refugee-hosting countries have strict encampment policies and may be hostile to IDPs. In some instances, municipal authorities can feel overwhelmed by 'normal' rural-urban migration and consider the displaced an additional burden on overstretched resources and infrastructure. This negative attitude of authorities towards displaced people may prevent migrants from harnessing the economic benefits their presence can create.

Dr Pantuliano then detailed the various challenges facing humanitarian response in urban contexts. She emphasized that while urban refugees have never been completely absent or ignored, camp-based provision has been the mainstream traditional humanitarian response for decades. The gaps in assistance can lead to chronic vulnerabilities or leaves acute needs unaddressed.

Some – but not many - humanitarian actors are increasingly trying to address this gap in coverage by expanding their reach beyond camps and rural refugees and IDPs to those in urban areas. However, many are adapting approaches and tools designed for camp based interventions which are ill-suited to urban areas. Dr Pantuliano gave the example of tools and approaches in the protection sector where the threats in the urban environment are drastically different from the camp based environment. Urban areas will see greater gang and criminal violence and the creation of safe environments is less within the control of humanitarian actors. Protection work in urban areas should involve more emphasis on community-led responses, working with CSOs, and focusing on legal aid and advocacy. Additionally, urban refugees and IDPs can be dispersed (or even hiding) within the local population, making protection work and targeting more challenging.

Dr Pantuliano then detailed four key priorities, all of which target primary sources of vulnerability in most urban centers: housing, land and property; livelihoods; urban violence; and legal aid. She expanded on the first two issues:

1. Housing, land and property:
 - a. Those displaced are open to acute stresses due to poor tenure security and high risk of eviction.
2. Livelihoods:
 - a. It is critical for the displaced population to integrate into the local economy, which is also a benefit for the host community. This contribution is evident in many cities; this can be seen in Amman and Damascus where there are masses of customers for Iraqi restaurants and shops or in the growth of Eastleigh, Nairobi where the business district is full of Somali enterprises.
 - b. However, these examples are the exception, not the rule. In many countries, refugees are barred from work. States that are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention have no obligation to give asylum seekers permission to work and even states that have signed the convention can make it almost impossible for refugees to work.
 - c. In the last five years, cash as a form of relief has become accepted by donors and aid agencies as a normal form of assistance. Cash transfers can work when people can buy what they need, which is often the case in urban settings. Urban infrastructure such as ATMs can also make cash transfers more efficient. In order for these interventions to work, it can require different staff expertise, such as the ability to carry out rigorous market analysis. Other important skills pertinent to the urban environment is the ability to network with the business sector, academics, and civil society organisations in the urban areas.

Dr Pantuliano states that there is an increase in policies and guidelines that address key issues raised by urban displacement, but this has yet to be translated into practice. She highlighted that some agencies such as IFRC and MSF have looked specifically at the important issue of urban violence and that there also has been a focus on gender-based violence and gang violence.

However, Dr Pantuliano emphasized that one of the most pressing issues is that there remains no international agency with overall responsibility or leadership on urban displacement.

Recommendations:

- Programming must be underpinned by robust analysis of each context, bearing in mind the extra layers of complexity and specific vulnerability in urban settings.
- Donors and agencies should invest in redeveloping appropriate systems, tools and approaches in order to be better equipped to respond to the specific challenges of displacement in urban areas.
- National actors should recognize the permanent or long-term nature of migration to urban areas and provide services before slums become entrenched; they should allow displaced populations freedom of movement and access to employment to allow them to maintain links with their country of origin and be self-sufficient.
- Development and humanitarian actors must improve their ability to share roles

Dr Nando Sigona

Dr Sigona discussed the relationship between migration and mobility and the Arab spring, looking at displacement produced by the uprising, how the uprising has affected the dynamics of mobility in the region and the EU's response to those displaced.

Dr Sigona presented a photo of Cecilia Malmstrom, the European Commissioner responsible for Home Affairs, at the Greece-Turkey border. He noted how the image highlights the tension between EU policies and sentiments of its officials.



The majority of people displaced by the Arab Spring were nationals, but there were also other groups displaced. Dr Sigona discussed three groups of people:

1. Third-country nationals, as seen in Libya: there were a large number of third country nationals – migrants working in the country legally and illegally – fleeing from the conflict. A significant issue was that there is a lack of institutionalized leadership or responsibility. Dr Sigona observed that EU policies towards the repatriation of third country nationals from Libya may have caused further vulnerabilities to the affected population.
2. Existing refugee populations in the affected countries, for example the 1 million Iraqi refugees in Syria. This created complicated protection issues as the refugees could easily be targeted by both sides of the conflict.
3. IDPs

Dr Sigona opined that the EU has placed a greater emphasis on protecting its borders than offering support or mobility to the displaced. He provided a set of facts to support his opinion: 17,000 Syrians have applied for asylum in 27 EU states, compared with 340,000 seeking refuge in Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon. The EU pledged to contribute to financial and logistic support for protection of displaced, for example donating 8 million to the Syrian Regional Response plan. However, between 2007 and 2010 the EU has also spent about 160 million to improve capacity at its borders, particularly the Greek border. In 2011 UNHCR made an appeal for resettling 8000 refugees and only 700 of them were in EU states - another sign of the EU's lack of willingness to provide protection within their borders.

Dr Sigona finished presenting a quote by Cecilia Malmstrom who, in a comment regarding the EU Migration and Mobility policy, stated:

'When the Arab Spring broke out, we failed to live up to those responsibilities. Instead of helping these countries and giving protection to those in need, the EU was too concerned with security issues and simply closed its borders. It's as if we said, "It's wonderful that you've started a revolution and want to embrace democracy, but we have an economic crisis to deal with so we can't help". In short, we missed a historic opportunity to show the North African countries, and the rest of the world, that the EU was committed to defending its fundamental values.'

Summary of questions and answers

A member of the audience asked “When does displacement end?”

Professor Zetter replied noting that no one can create a final ‘end’ point as there are different complex dimensions to migration: psychological, material and institutional.

1. Psychological: Migrants’ perspective of when their displacement has ended can depend on the context; for many Palestinian refugees their displacement is still ongoing.
2. Material: Displacement can end materially when the displaced population reaches the same level of economic integration as the host community.
3. Institutional: this can occur when humanitarians and development agendas merge together.

Professor Zetter concluded by stating that each situation is different, and that the three durable solutions (return, resettlement, integration) does not often apply to many of the displaced population.

Dr Pantuliano added that there can be a great deal of variation amongst communities - some members can continue to choose to identify as a refugee or IDP with others rejecting those labels.

Another audience member noted that solutions to protracted displacement such as increased mobility are in stark contrast with dominant political ideas about migration and citizenship; what can be done to resolve this?

Dr Sigona stated that it is important to help translate academic work into policy and practice, noting the importance of facilitating this process in order to enable change.

Another question addressed climate change and its effects on displacement.

Professor Zetter answered that evidence shows that climate change and severe environmental changes does precipitate displacement, but usually only in areas where there are existing vulnerabilities. This then highlights the need to develop long-term DRR policies for adaptation and resilience. Advocacy is also an important role for humanitarian or development organisations in order to ensure that individuals can exercise their rights when faced with decisions of relocation and displacement.