

Bridging the gaps: Governance of protracted displacement across global, regional and national levels

The current institutional and governance system of displacement has become much more complex with the inclusion of ever more actors. But it still leaves open multiple gaps of protection. To close these protection gaps and to more effectively address protracted displacement, it requires a better collaboration and coordination between international, regional and domestic stakeholders, a long-term development rather than a short-term humanitarian approach and sincere recognition of displaced people's rights and their mobility needs.

78 per cent of the world's refugees live in protracted displacement

There has been a steady and significant increase over recent years in the number of displaced people, in particular in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who live in long-term situations of vulnerability, dependency and legal insecurity. The term protracted displacement refers to entrenched situations, in which the capabilities of and opportunities for people to rebuild their lives after displacement are severely limited. In many cases, they can neither return home nor move on to other countries, nor really integrate in the country of (first) reception. The cyclical and protracted nature of many conflicts, a general decline in the support for durable solutions, mounting hostility towards foreigners in many countries and a challenging climate for multilateral cooperation are among the reasons for protracted displacement.

Collaborating across global, regional and national levels

Global actors have developed integrated approaches to address the needs of, and to offer long-term perspectives for, refugees and IDPs and to tackle the challenges arising for local host communities. This is in line with the [UN Global Compact on Refugees](#) calling for the establishment of a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach, which foresees the involvement of a broad set of actors—including civil society organisations, local

communities and refugees themselves—in the design, monitoring and implementation of its actions. Tripartite agreements have been a particular strategy of UNHCR engagement with refugee-receiving countries and their countries of origin across various regions. Moreover, in recent years, more emphasis has been placed within regional approaches on improving host–refugee relations and promoting broader economic development in host communities to facilitate solutions.

Integrating development and humanitarian approaches

In Africa and Asia, refugees and IDPs are often seen to be the responsibility of the humanitarian community. Receiving country policies often restrict access to labour markets, limit mobility and do not provide long-term legal status; thus locking displaced people in continuous dependency to humanitarian support. Development actors might, however, be better positioned to work towards longer-term durable solutions, but refugees and IDPs are often not a specific target group for their interventions. The gap between short-term humanitarian aid and more future-oriented development policies and programmes needs to be bridged. The [2016 EU's policy framework on forced displacement](#) is one right step into this direction as it aims to prevent displacement situations from becoming protracted through linking humanitarian assistance with development interventions and by facilitating moving from situations of “care and maintenance” to self-reliance. Regional development and protection programmes (RDPPs) have evolved as the main instrument to put the EU's development-humanitarian assistance approach into practice.

Bridging the gaps: From protracted displacement to solutions



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Embracing mobility and translocal connectivity

Mobility and translocal network connections play an important part in displaced people’s livelihood strategies. The reunification with family members after displacement is not only a right in itself, but also a central driver of onward mobility. In both the Global South and North, displaced people’s mobility and connectivity are restricted through limits on their right to freedom of movement, through encampment and containment policies, restrictive visa and family reunification policies, tightened border security and externalised migration control.

The formal governance of protection neither adequately reflects the mobility needs nor the translocal connectivity of displaced people. While the potential of migration as an adaptation strategy to multiple stresses and as a leeway to strengthen economic resilience is often emphasised, for instance in the [2017 EU’s external action Strategic Approach to Resilience](#), a securitisation and migration control agenda prevails in most policy fora. Limitations to labour mobility, for instance, do hinder the self-sufficiency of displaced people and also make local integration more difficult to realise. The territorial understanding of protection underlining the international protection system should be redesigned to ensure that people are able to reach safe countries and in consonance with their transnational links. Current policy debates around humanitarian visas and private sponsorship schemes have great potential in this regard.

Enabling displaced people to access rights

At the national level, legislation and policy can contribute to creating protracted displacement or help to alleviate such precarious conditions. The asylum decision-making process is, obviously, of huge significance for the everyday lives of refugees and for the (dis)continuation of their individual displacement situation: The legal categories that are imposed on asylum-seekers in this process further dictate their place of residence, their ability to work, their access to accommodation, education and healthcare, their rights to family reunification and their longer-term perspectives to obtain citizenship. The exercise of rights and access to services need to be ensured by implementing legislation and policies that place international protection claimants and beneficiaries—and their present and future needs and interests—more squarely at the forefront. Recognition of refugees’ rights has the potential to strengthen their contribution to the social and economic life of the country of reception and directly addresses the protracted nature of their displacement.

This *practice note* is based on the forthcoming TRAFIG *working paper no.3* “Governing Protracted displacement: An analysis across global, regional and domestic contexts” by Ferreira et al. It draws on comparative insights from eight different countries that host large groups of displaced people and which are the focus of the TRAFIG project: Greece, Germany and Italy in Europe; Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Tanzania in Africa; and Jordan and Pakistan in Asia.

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Contact

Dr Benjamin Etzold
BICC
Pfarrer-Byns-Str. 1, 53121 Bonn • phone +49 (0)228 911 96-24
contact@trafig.eu • www.trafig.eu • Twitter @TRAFIG_EU

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