Migration & Peacebuilding

Analysis and Recommendations from a Global Consultation, Exploring How Peacebuilding and Migration Intersect.

August 2022

peace direct

About this report

This report is divided into two main sections.

The first section on Violence and Migration explores the intersection of conflict and displacement, the role of structural violence in global migration patterns, conflict along migratory journeys, and conflict experienced by migrants in host countries.

The second section looks at the links between peacebuilding and migration, how improving cohesion can prevent displacement, improve integration and develop sustainable exit strategies, and the importance of including migrants in peace processes.

Background

In February and April 2022, Peace Direct, in collaboration with Search for Common Ground (Search), American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS) convened a two-part virtual learning exchange to explore the relationship between peacebuilding and migration, and the role of peacebuilders across this intersection.

Over 100 people shared their insights, experiences, and analysis over the course of a multi-day consultation and series of individual interviews. Our aim for this learning exchange was to provide a space for knowledge building around existing connections between peacebuilding and migration, as well as to reflect on where this link can or should be further developed.

We would like to thank Scoville Fellow Elsie Mares as the main author of this report. We would also like to thank Dimitri Kotsiras, Shannon Paige, and Vahe Mirikian for their written contributions. This report includes contributions from people who participated in either the online consultation, the semi-structured interviews, or both phases of the learning exchange. Where quotes are anonymous, they come from participants who preferred to keep their identity private due to personal and/or security concerns. Although only a handful of participants are directly quoted, the complete analysis reflects the broader dialogue that developed from all participants' contributions. The contents of this report are the responsibility of Peace Direct and should not be taken to represent the views of any other organization.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to everyone who shared their time, experiences, knowledge, and perspectives to make this exploratory dialogue a success.

From the local peacebuilders, scholar-practitioners, and humanitarian workers who have been working at the peace-migration nexus throughout their careers, to those who approached this intersection from a place of humility and a commitment to building knowledge, the spectrum of experiences, backgrounds, and areas of expertise made for a rich and insightful learning exchange.

Peace Direct would like to thank our partners for their contributions throughout this endeavor, as well as the co-host organizations who supported moderation, analysis, and research for this process. We would also like to give special thanks to Merwyn De Mello (Catholic Mobilizing Network), Douglas Juarez (AFSC Latin America and The Caribbean), and Daniel Tse (Assisi Community) for lending their advocacy-informed expertise to support the shaping of this learning exchange's direction and planning. Many thanks also to Nathan Ojo (Scoville Fellow at Search for Common Ground). Finally, thank you to Monica Curca (Founder and Director of Activate Labs) for her guidance, support, and artwork contributions.

Contents

Executive Summary

It is estimated that 89.3 million people around the world were displaced by the end of 2021. This is the highest level of migration and displacement since the Second World War, which ended almost 77 years ago. The number of people fleeing their homes as a result of persecution, human rights violations, violent conflict, and other life-threatening circumstances has more than doubled over the past decade.[1]

Migration and forced displacement are generally viewed through a humanitarian lens. This often means that agencies provide aid and establish formal camps to temporarily house refugees. However, the long-lasting impacts of violence and conflict on displaced and refugee communities, as well as the communities impacted by irregular mass migration, cannot be overstated. To that end, peacebuilding can play an essential role in supporting migrants and displaced communities at every stage of their journey. The intersection of peacebuilding and migration is rarely articulated and often under-recognized. In this report, we seek to bridge this gap and unpack the complex links between conflict, peace, and migration.

1   UNHCR. (June 2022) Global displacement hits another record, capping decade-long rising trend. https://www.unrefugees.org/news/unhcr-global-displacement-hits-another-record-capping-decade-long-rising-trend/

Peace Direct, in collaboration with the American Friends Service Committee, Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security, and Search for Common Ground, convened a learning exchange to give peacebuilders an opportunity to engage in discussion and reflection on the relationship between migration and peacebuilding.

Over 100 people took part, including local peacebuilders, immigration justice advocates, humanitarian workers, academics, and others working at the intersection of peace and migration.

For many participants, this discussion served as a preliminary and exploratory learning opportunity. For others, the conversations offered an opportunity to share insights on specialized areas of expertise related to conflict, migration, and displacement. Across this research, participants agreed that links between global migration and peace require further reflection, analysis, and understanding.

Our findings include the following:

1. Applying a conflict analysis lens to forced migration, particularly conflict-induced displacement, results in a greater understanding of why displacement occurs and how it can be responded to. Centering the expertise of local people and conflict-affected populations helps peacebuilders recognize displacement and forced migration not only as a consequence of violence, but as a form of violence itself.

2. While not all migration occurs because of violence, global migratory patterns are shaped in part by various forms of structural violence. Dominant views of migratory experiences which insist on separating 'voluntary' from 'involuntary' instances of migration do not account for this reality. These views lack nuance and exclude certain migrants from the services and protections they need. Allowing marginalized communities to define their own experiences leads to greater clarity and a pushing-back

against norms and conventions, which may reinforce the violence that many migrants face.

3. Violent conflict is not only a catalyst of migration, but often something that migrants face along their transit journeys and upon arrival to new contexts. There is a place for peacebuilding programs, like early warning and response, as well as social cohesion, to be usefully employed across many aspects of migration.

4. To some extent, peacebuilding is already mitigating and/or preventing conflict-induced displacement. However, this work could be strengthened and expanded, by formally recognizing the link between building peace and empowering people to choose if they want to stay or leave a given context rather than be forced to move because of conflict.

5. Building social cohesion between migrants and host communities is crucial to prevent new cycles of violent conflict from emerging. This is particularly true when migrants might be vulnerable to violence from the host community. By helping to address underlying tensions, including hostility towards and persecution of migrants and displaced people, peacebuilders can play a role in ensuring that migrant and host communities can find peace. Beyond addressing grievances and prejudices at an interpersonal and community level, peacebuilders can apply their skills to recognize and address how state authorities can also be active participants in conflict.

6. While preventing and responding to conflict-induced displacement is an implicit goal for peacebuilders, little articulation is given to this aim. This poses a barrier to the peacebuilding aims of sustainable peace. These aims include the safe return and reintegration for displaced people as an aim of peacebuilding, practices can support more effective programming. Identifying and articulating this as a goal helps to end

violent conflict and restore some pre-conflict conditions that can also empower displaced communities to have more options.

7. Migrant, refugee, and diaspora communities can – and sometimes do – play significant roles in destination contexts. Ensuring the participation of migrant communities in peace processes, as well as inclusion in the broader social fabric, can prevent tensions from arising and devolving into violent conflict.

8. Below are some recommendations for the peacebuilding sector that were informed from the findings of the report:

   - Incorporate displacement and irregular migration patterns into conflict analysis to better understand the patterns of violence and dehumanization that affect migrants.

   - Acknowledge those who have been displaced by conflict in reconciliation processes.

   - Ensure the inclusion and participation of migrant communities in all levels of peace processes.

   - The peacebuilding, humanitarian, and migration sectors must exchange lessons learned and coordinate efforts around the complex nature of conflict to help design responses and solutions to instances of displacement.

- Create opportunities for marginalized populations to define their experiences.

- Address and work to deconstruct the siloed nature of peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian work in areas where these approaches impede progress.

- Make conflict mediation practices and tools accessible to humanitarian practitioners who are providing services for migrant communities.

- Formalize the prevention of displacement as a peacebuilding priority and objective.

- Promote dialogue and coordination between local peacebuilding practitioners and the humanitarian sector in countries of origin and destination countries to develop transnational solidarity to address conflict, mitigate violence, and build social cohesion for migrants.

- Recognize the value of the lived experiences of migrants and create spaces for migrants and displaced people to better include their experiences in programmatic efforts to promote social cohesion, reintegration, and ultimately prevent instances of forced migration.

Introduction

We know that peacebuilding plays an essential role at every stage of population movements. Yet, peacebuilding is not always considered in the context of global migration. Whilst peacebuilders acknowledge that existing approaches at the intersection with migration exist, these links are rarely articulated or recognized.

Even beyond existing approaches, migration and peacebuilding are usually regarded separately. Most aid work related to migration sits in the humanitarian sphere. Given the intertwined nature of global challenges such as violent conflict, state fragility, displacement, and mass migration – this research seeks to bridge the gaps between peacebuilding and migration efforts. The report also aims to address gaps in the nexus of conflict, violence, and migration.

Peace Direct, in collaboration with the American Friends Service Committee, Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security, and Search for Common Ground, convened a learning exchange to give peacebuilders the opportunity to engage in discussion and reflection on the relationship between migration and peacebuilding.

This learning exchange provided an opportunity for peacebuilders, people in conflict-affected regions, academics, and humanitarian workers working at the nexus of peace and migration to share their perspectives on the relationship between violence, conflict, migration, and peacebuilding. Peacebuilders reflected on how their work to prevent and respond to violent conflict might play a role in different stages of migratory cycles and identified possible gaps that they are well-positioned to fill.

This report primarily explores the intersections of peacebuilding and migration. The hope is that the findings of this report will further the peacebuilding sector's understanding of its role in responding to global migration trends resulting from violent conflict, and recognition of how peace and migration are linked more broadly.

Methodology

The first part of the learning exchange involved a global online three-day consultation from February 14th to February 17th, 2022. This took place on Platform4Dialogue, Peace Direct's text-based online discussion platform.

Over 100 people engaged with the pre-prepared questions across 9 discussion threads, which then informed the discussions during the participant-led dialogue. The second part of the learning exchange consisted of semi-structured interviews with 20 individuals. These interviews enabled deeper discussions to better understand the nuanced intersectionality of conflict, violence, migration, and peacebuilding. These interviews took place in April 2022. Some interviewees were participants in the initial learning exchange who expressed interest in further engagement, while others were individuals whose work was highlighted by participants engaged on Platform4Dialogue.

Participants' diverse backgrounds, ages, gender, ethnicities, professions, and countries of practice gave insight into a broad range of experiences and perspectives. This learning exchange is not intended to be representative of everyone working on issues of migration, forced displacement, and conflict. We hope that this report's insights highlight some of the peacebuilding sector's existing program work that connects to migration and highlights areas where further engagement is needed.

A significant limitation of this research is that engagement from the 106 participants was largely uneven across the learning exchange. This reflected varying levels of access to reliable technology, personal time and bandwidth, and other barriers to engagement among participants. Despite this small sample size and uneven engagement, the dialogue that developed was rich, intimate, and highly informed by lived experience and direct practice.

Additionally, while the first portion of the learning exchange featured a text-based platform with built-in translation functionality, the second round of additional interviews was conducted in English, French, and Spanish only. Of those, the vast majority took place in English. We recognize that this may have excluded potential participants and reproduced certain forms of exclusion that privilege those most proximate to power, who are most often White, Global North actors.

Despite these limitations, our in-depth discussions spanned continents, sectors, and experiences providing rich and valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of local peace practitioners, many of whom had direct experience within the peace-migration nexus, that should invite the sector to rethink and strengthen its relationship to migration.

A Note on Language

Throughout the learning exchange, the participants approached this discussion with a nuanced view of how violence, both direct and structural, shapes migratory experiences. Bringing a peacebuilding lens to discussions on displacement and migration resulted in critical analysis of the dominant concepts of migrant categories. Peacebuilders, especially in the Global South, shared their understanding of forced migrations that did not always overlap with the legal distinctions accepted by the international community. This unexpected element of the learning exchange challenged Peace Direct and our collaborating organizations to develop inclusive and locally-led ways of discussing and thinking about migrant experiences.

Global migration encompasses a spectrum of experiences, drivers, and motivations. While it is crucial to identify how certain migrant experiences are shaped by persecution and violence, the current approach to categorizing displaced people tends to lack the necessary nuance to recognize the wide range of forced migration experiences.[2]

Over-simplifying definitions of migrant experiences can create a false binary with negative consequences for migrants. Refugees are already an underserved and marginalized group, yet migrants who are excluded because of the narrow definitions often lose out on access to crucial legal protections if they do not fit neatly under the refugee category. This dilemma is captured in Swisspeace's toolbox on Migration in Peace Policy and Practice.[3] They note that insisting on separating out migrants from displaced people:

> *"Creates a rhetoric of 'two kinds of people' which is troubling as it undermines humanitarian principles in emergency responses and reflects narratives of exclusion and inequality that are often at the center of the conflicts that force people to flee. Recognizing that anyone on the move may have a well-founded fear of persecution and be entitled to international protection does not undermine the protection that refugees are entitled to, yet it is key to ensuring that migration policy accounts for different protection needs."*

Acknowledging the specific experiences and needs of people who are clearly and directly displaced by violent conflict is critical. While all migrants should be afforded rights and protections, resources and direct refuge are vital for displaced people. In instances where these specific experiences are referenced, appropriate language of 'refugees' and 'Internally Displaced People' (IDPs) will be used. However, for a more general discussion of violence, conflict, and migration, terms such as '*displaced persons and other migrants*' or '*migrants, including refugees and IDPs*' reflect a more inclusive view and accurate view of language.[4] For the sake of clarity, the term 'migrants' is broadly used throughout this report and encompasses the spectrum of migratory experiences.

2   Carling, J. (2017) Refugee Advocacy and the Meaning of Migrants. PRIO Policy Brief. https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile. ashx?id=326&type=publicationfile

3   Grossenbacher, A. (2020) Toolbox – Addressing Migration in Peace Policy and Practice. Swisspeace KOFF, FDFA (Human Security Division)

4   Grossenbacher, A. (2020) Toolbox – Addressing Migration in Peace Policy and Practice. Swisspeace KOFF, FDFA (Human Security Division)

Migration and the Localization Agenda

Local people are central to the resolution of conflicts. Peace is not sustainable if imposed from the outside. Peace Direct has been at the forefront of advocating for local leadership and ownership of peacebuilding processes since our founding.

The recent commitments and momentum towards shifting resources, and in particular funding, to local organizations is commendable. However, in response to this change, recent discussions and efforts to assign a meaningful and measurable definition of 'local' have excluded people who are the most impacted by violent conflict. This includes the inclination to tie definitions of the 'local' with constructs such as citizenship, time spent in an area, or other measures which are not representative of the experiences of displaced people. How can peacebuilders account for people who have been forced out of their homes in our understanding of who is 'local' to a conflict?

When considering the 'local' within this framework, we are able to understand how it is actually migrants, and specifically displaced people, who are among the most proximate to the impact of conflict, despite being physically removed from it. The localization agenda must ensure the inclusion of migrants and refugees. They are the ones who share contextual knowledge, cultural competence, and a personal stake in achieving peace and reconciliation. At first glance, it might seem like an oxymoron to refer to people who have traveled away from their original contexts as 'local.' However, when referring to those who are closest to conflict – migrants, displaced people, and diaspora communities are often those who have been most impacted. When talking about the issue of global migration as a whole, who is more 'local' to the issues and challenges of migration, than those who have experienced it directly?

This dilemma presented one of the primary motivations for approaching the migration debate and seeking to further develop our learnings and knowledge.

We caution against any urge to resist the notion of 'local' to nationality or geographic location. This is far too limiting when accounting for the complexities of conflict, especially transnational conflicts. This is also especially true when thinking about the way that violence shapes human movement within and across borders.

While there is no universal definition of 'local', Peace Direct has previously offered this understanding:

> "By 'local', we refer to those who must deal with conflict on a day-to-day basis and live with its consequences. The scale of 'local' is defined in relation to the specific conflict and context. For example, 'local' can refer to those in the country in relation to international agencies. In some situations, it can also refer to residents of a particular community or region experiencing conflict in contrast to a national civil society organization."[5]

Participants in our learning exchange considered how migration might be understood in the context of localization. The idea of 'local' being in relation to position and impact was further expanded on.

Vani Bhardwaj summarized who is local in relation to conflict:

> "'Local' – being the direct stakeholders, includes the first line of those who get impacted and become collateral to a conflict".

---

5   "Locally Driven Peacebuilding" (2015) Brief by Purdue Peace Project, Concordis International, Peace Initiative Network, American Friends Service Committee, Catalyst for Peace, and Peace Direct. https://cla.purdue.edu/ppp/documents/publications/Locally.pdf

She summarized how this thinking can be extrapolated to other arenas, providing an example of a natural disaster:

"For instance, droughts and floods impact those on the ground initially, they belong to the center of the concentric circle of impact intensity… Therefore, inner circle afflicted people are primary stakeholders, then we transition to secondary stakeholders such as district administration, street and ward committees – usually headed by local elites."

Considering positionality and centering people directly impacted by a phenomenon is how the localization agenda can operate to identify and defer to local leadership and support local priorities. Merwyn De Mello, reflected on this experience working within refugee camps:

"There is always someone local left behind who may either decide to leave or will be forced to leave."

He contextualized his thoughts in light of the recent Afghanistan withdrawal noting that:

"Thousands of Afghans were evacuated leaving behind family members who are desperate to leave and others who cannot leave" and suggested that perhaps, *"it is not so much as the need to define who is local, but the importance of having solutions emerge from local voices, which means addressing 'power.' Power is invariably the elephant in the room, so it is either the leveling off or the relinquishing of power that will allow the local voices to be truly heard and represented. For it is in the hearing of those that bring sustainable solutions."*

In the context of migration, the 'local' is pushed beyond geographic bounds, calling on peacebuilders and other practitioners to think beyond nationality and other surface level measures of who holds contextual expertise and stakes in solutions.

Part 1: Violence and Migration

As participants convened to explore the relationship between peacebuilding and migration, their collective experience and expertise generated analysis of the connections between violence and global migration more broadly.

Though this learning exchange was intended to focus on how peacebuilding relates to migration, the process resulted in an assessment of how violence and conflict can be understood in the context of migration. Peacebuilders unpacked some of the nuances around the relationship between violent conflict and displacement. This was followed by analysis of how structural violence shapes global migration patterns, and how conflict manifests along migratory journeys and upon arrival to new destinations. These reflections lay the groundwork for identifying gaps and entry points where the role of peacebuilding could present added value to disrupt the violence that migrants and displaced people face.

The following analysis is grounded in the fundamental principle that migration is a human right. For many people affected by conflict, human mobility within and across borders is an essential avenue for safety and survival. Beyond those who migrate for survival, freedom of movement has been established by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is a guiding principle of most humanitarian workers and peacebuilders working within migration.[6]

Our exploration of how violence shapes instances of migration and displacement should not be interpreted as supporting any notion that global migration should be addressed to reduce levels of migration. Rather, analyzing migration and displacement through the lens of conflict and violence is intended to identify entry points for peacebuilders to reduce and prevent the violence that migrants face. In the same vein that migration is a right, peacebuilders and immigration justice advocates seek to make migration a matter of agency, dignity, and safety for all – rather than an experience marked by conflict, harm, and marginalization.

---

6   UN General Assembly. (1948). Universal declaration of human rights (217 [III] A). Paris
      http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

Conflict and Displacement

One of the most obvious links between violent conflict and migration is 'conflict-induced displacement'. 'Conflict-induced displacement' describes migration that occurs as a direct result of violence. This includes – but is not limited to – war and ethnic or religious conflict, among others. According to the UNHCR:

> *"The number of forcibly displaced people both within countries and across borders as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or events seriously disturbing public order has nearly doubled in the last 10 years."*[7]

There were 41 million forcibly displaced people at the end of 2010 and the figure nearly doubled to 78.5 million by the end of 2020.[8]

Academics and humanitarian organizations increasingly note that due to the rigidity of international legal convention, a significant level of displacement-related migration is likely categorized as 'economic-driven migration'.[9] The true number of people who experience migration or displacement due to conflict is largely considered to be higher than these figures suggest. This report explores the limitations of viewing economic reasons as being the primary driver of global migration in the section on Structural Violence on page 19. Even when applying a narrow scope, the levels of worldwide displacement are higher than ever and are expected to continue rising.

When confronted with these staggering figures and statistics, the individual realities and experiences of displacement can often be overlooked or systematically ignored. The human implications and experiences are critical to develop our collective understanding of the trauma faced, and to support effective approaches to conflict-induced migration.

Displacement: a Strategy of War or Byproduct of it?

Peacebuilders know that to transform the conditions of violent conflict, it is imperative to understand the motivations behind conflict. Participants shared perspectives about whether conflict-induced displacement is a tool of war, an incidental byproduct of violence, or something in between.

When applying a conflict-analysis lens to displacement, some peacebuilders and other practitioners shared their understanding that displacement functions in the same capacity as other strategies of violence. They view actions to displace individuals and communities as strategies to intentionally change and control a given social makeup. A participant from the learning exchange, Saeeda Diep, argued that:

> *"Conflict actors most of the time in the name of religion and ethnicity intend to displace people who believe in different religions and belong to different ethnic backgrounds. Violence is the weapon to create fear among vulnerable communities".*

Similarly, Sawssan Abou-Zahr highlighted Syria and Bosnia as recent examples where she views the displacement that occurred as an explicitly intended consequence of conflict. She wrote that:

7   UNHCR – Global Trends in Forced Displacement – 2020 (Copenhagen, 2021)
8   UNHCR – Global Trends in Forced Displacement – 2020 (Copenhagen, 2021)
9   UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms, June 2006, Rev.1, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/42ce7d444.html

"Displacement is intended in many violent conflicts to conquer land or change the demographics to gain an advantage or domination in heterogeneous contexts of different sects, religions, or ethnicities".

Referring to her own Lebanese context, Abou-Zahr argued that this form of intentional demographic shift through large-scale displacement occurred following the conflict where the perpetrators:

"Aimed at gaining the 'enemy's territories' during the civil war through tactics like 'intimidation, verbal [and] physical threats, kidnapping of a family member or murdering them, targeting one's work or business to lead to financial instability, targeting religious symbols to make people feel insecure' with the objective of causing people to flee."

Jigyasa Gulati agreed that sometimes displacement is a clear objective of conflict actors. She offered her analysis of the Rohingya exodus from Myanmar as an example where an ethnic *"community was targeted by the forces who wanted to simply get rid of them either by moving them away or harming them."*

Here, Gulati refers to how 730,000 people including nearly half-a-million children fled from Myanmar's Rakhine State to Bangladesh and other neighboring countries. In line with Gulati's analysis that this was an instance of intentional displacement, in 2017, the UN concluded that actions of the Myanmar military had *"genocidal intent".*[10] Thousands of Rohingya remain in refugee camps to this day, including over 70,000 children born in the camps.

Understanding displacement as a strategic tool of violent conflict also helps to explain why it is often peacebuilders, human rights activists, humanitarian workers, and other community workers who are often the most vulnerable to being displaced. Forcing people who are working to prevent conflict out of their communities disempowers them, and prevents them from organizing to end the violence and build peace.

On the other hand, many peacebuilders and other participants highlighted that there are other instances in which displacement occurs, not because conflict groups intend for populations to flee and for demographic shifts to occur but because the conditions created by a conflict make it uninhabitable. Jigyasa Gulati provided some nuance to her previous point, describing her view that, in Afghanistan, the conflict actors *"didn't directly want people to leave."* She also suggested that the internal displacement of over 5 million people and emigration of millions as of 2021 were unintended consequences of the violence.[11]

Lucie Bello expanded on Gulati's analysis describing how:

"Actors of the conflicts in the Sahel have the objective of terrorizing the communities so that they accept their principles, whether willingly or not". She wrote: "this situation of insecurity pushes many young people to try the [migratory] path of Saharan or maritime adventures, or to join the camp of radical groups to fight their own population."

Highlighting how the goal here isn't demographic shifts but control and conflict participation. Bello noted that beyond direct conflict-induced displacement, further migration is catalyzed by *"growing insecurity"* among other factors such as *"drought, famine, and violent conflict,"* which cause communities to flee. The relationship between insecurity and conflict is increasingly emphasized by local peacebuilding practitioners around the world, pointing to how development and peacebuilding must go hand-in-hand to address violent conflict and its consequences – including displacement.

---

10   Van Manen, Onno. (2020) "3 Years After the Rohingya Exodus, No Peace and No Progress". The Diplomat.

11   UNHCR, (2021) "How many refugees are fleeing the crisis in Afghanistan?"

Case Study: Conflict-Induced Displacement Exacerbates National Insecurity

Murabak Tukur, a Nigeria-based peacebuilder who participated in the second phase of the learning exchange, illustrated the cyclical relationship between violence, internal migration, and social instability leading to further conflict and displacement.

He described how farmers and agricultural workers in Nigeria's rural regions are increasingly targeted by bandit groups.[12] Many of these groups were formed in response to growing inter-communal conflict over land, resources and ethnic tensions. Those directly impacted or victimized by armed conflict often found themselves internally displaced. Even among those not directly targeted, in the absence of safety and security, many farmers and agricultural workers have made the difficult decision to migrate toward Nigeria's urban and metropolitan areas, before they become the next victims of the violence.

These high levels of internal displacements catalyze new cycles of conflict and further migration flows in a couple of ways. The internally displaced communities who relocate may be faced with tension from the host communities. Additionally, these disenfranchised victims of armed conflict or intimidation are increasingly vulnerable to recruitment into organized crime and armed conflict groups. Recruiters often prey on the frustration and desperation fueled by difficult migratory journeys and experiences.

A direct consequence of migration patterns from rural to urban locales in Nigeria, as in other regions of the world, are labor shortages plaguing the domestic agricultural and farming industry, which, over time, contributes to food insecurity across the nation and potentially disrupts supply chains. Food insecurity thus reinforces the challenges which underlie violence and conflict in the first place, exacerbating migration trends within and out of the country.[13]

Mubarak's testimony illustrates how peace and safety for farmers and addressing the violence which is fueling internal migration would have a ripple effect on broader stability and prosperity.

The rural to urban migration patterns described by Murabak were echoed by a number of local practitioners working across various states. Amani Jospin, a peacebuilder in the Democratic Republic of Congo, commented that:

"Currently we observe a high rate of rural exodus in the DRC, especially in the East following repeated wars, disasters and populations are not assisted and are forced to migrate to other countries, areas, provinces. Similarly, all participants who discussed the high levels of displacement across Colombia described a similar migratory trend. This pattern speaks to the way that conflict manifests differently in different contexts, suggesting that the increased fragility of rural communities, which are often overlooked or ignored, leads to heightened vulnerability and a more severe impact of armed conflict. It also demonstrates how peacebuilders view the intertwined nature of rural disenfranchisement and internal displacement."

*This case study is drawn directly from input and dialogue developed within the learning exchange

---

12 This term was used by local practitioners in referring to different conflict actors or criminal groups in their contexts. We acknowledge that across different regions, this language might denote different groups.

13 Sadiddin, A., Cattaneo, A., Cirillo, M. et al. (2019) Food insecurity as a determinant of international migration: evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa. Food Sec. 11, 515–530. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-019-00927-w

Vincent Lyn, an ardent advocate for youth protection, children's rights and refugee justice, discussed how vulnerability to forcible recruitment of children in conflict-affected regions around the world, leads to mass migration. Lyn highlighted how the *"schools and hospitals, and the other services that provide [children] with the basics of life as a result of war"* both reinforce the social turmoil that exacerbates conflict and catalyzes migration.

Lyn also raised a theme that various participants touched on: the pressures of parenthood as a motivation to migrate. Lyn and others highlighted how, rather than intending to displace people, conflict actors may drive families away by disrupting access to social services and institutions.

In fragile states, peacebuilders understand that in the absence of positive peace, when faced with barriers to basic needs, limited or failing public services, and other social challenges, parents often shape decisions related to migration. Even in the absence of being directly impacted, parents may feel forced to migrate to protect their families from destitution and violence. In this sense, displacement, while not intended or exclusively tied to conflict, is the result of the broader context of fragility associated with violent conflict.

Local practitioners are working across varying contexts. Their experiences form multiple different ideas about why and how conflict-induced displacement occurs. These experiences distort the notion that displacement is only either intentional or not.

Catherine Martha Agwang, for example, suggested that the inclination to *"judge whether conflict actors intend to displace people"* is a misrepresentation of how catalysts of displacement are often more complex. She emphasized and recognized that often, in instances of violent conflict, these dynamics are not so clear cut and *"many things are done indirectly that may drive people away to look for better situations".*

Agwang's comments highlight how the complexities of conflict are interwoven in layered ways – reflecting varied motivations and interests. Cutting across perspectives was the idea that, ultimately, being displaced or being forced to migrate is often driven by several varied factors rather than one single reason. Increasingly, local people emphasize that silos between humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding largely exist theoretically. These sectors are disconnected from the intertwined reality of the challenges.

Case Study: Conflict and COVID-19 Exacerbating Destitution, Forcible Recruitment, and Internal Displacement in Colombia

Disenfranchised people, especially youth, who have no opportunity for economic mobility and see no escape from poverty are often targets for recruitment or coercion by armed-conflict groups. According to UNICEF, between 2005 and 2020, more than 93,000 children were verified as being recruited and used by warring parties. However, the total number is believed to be much higher.[14] The relationship between economic status and forcible recruitment or coercion into armed conflict is intrinsic.

For example, in Colombia, Save the Children recorded at least two cases of child recruitment every month in some of the country's most impoverished and conflict-affected regions of Norte de Santander, Nariño, and Arauca in 2021.[15] Peacebuilders across the regions sounded alarms about how the detrimental economic impact of COVID-19 would only further exacerbate the vulnerability of children and young people to involvement in the armed conflict – especially among some of Colombia's most impoverished communities in rural and campesino areas.[16] As predicted, COVID-19 created a disastrous recipe of accelerating conflict and new armed groups, together with closed schools and economic desperation. This led to a surge in the numberof young people and children being forcibly recruited, coerced, or manipulated into criminal activity or into the fold of armed conflict actors.

In recent years, Colombia has exceeded all other nations in terms of highest rates of internal displacement, reaching an estimated 8.3 million people in 2022.[17] The relationship between disproportionate levels of conflict, poverty, and violence in Colombia's rural and disenfranchised regions is compounded with Colombia's racial and ethnic dimension of the conflict. It is important to note that the communities affected by poverty and those most vulnerable to violence are largely made up of afro-Colombia and indigenous communities who do not want to leave their sacred homes or communities.

Although conflict isn't unique to the countryside, disenfranchised communities who lack social amenities, economic opportunity, or recourse, when intimidated or affected by the violence, are often forced to flee to urban pockets. In this case, armed conflict is one layer of the multiple, intertwined factors which shape migratory flows.

14   United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. (2021) "Children recruited by armed forces or armed groups".
15   Save the Children- Child's Rights Resource Center (2021). "Stop the War on Children: A crisis of recruitment". Save the Children International. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/stop-the-war-on-children-a-crisis-of-recruitment/
16   Taylor, Luke. (2020) "How Colombia's armed groups are exploiting COVID-19 to recruit children" The New Humanitarian.https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/09/10/Colombia-conflict-armed-groups-child-recruitment
17   UNHCR (2017). "UNHCR- Fact Sheet Colombia" UNHCR Colombia Factsheet – February 2017.pdf.

Displacement as a Form of Violence

Whether an intended tool or a secondary consequence of violent conflict, most of the participants agreed that displacement should be thought of as a form of harm in and of itself. Peacebuilders and advocates alike recognize that conflict-induced displacement is not only the result of violence, but also acts of violence themselves.

As commented by one anonymous participant, *"forced displacement is always inherently violent,"* and *"this violence can be physical, emotional and psychological".* Vani Bhardwaj expanded on this idea, writing that:

> *"Violence is manifested from a sense of uprootedness, powerlessness, loss of agency as well. The psycho-social impacts upon emotional exploitation, erosion of livelihoods, spatial-temporal displacement bring about violence that cannot be quantified statistically".*

Jigyasa Gulati echoed similar sentiments, adding that displacement *"leaves a sense of injustice with the affected people which is also hard to address".* Peacebuilders, especially local practitioners, present an understanding of displacement as an instance of harm that is deeply personal. When this violence is not responded to, either through support, reconciliation, justice, or accountability, it can lead to the persistence of violence or be a factor underlying new cycles of conflict.

Fady Traore grounded her understanding of the violence of displacement. She shared that:

> *"In the Sahel, populations are deeply attached to their areas of residence because it is a choice that is made based on cultural identity or the practice of subsistence activities. In the last ten years, most migratory movements [in the Sahel] have been linked to inter- and intra-community armed conflicts, the presence or threats of radical groups, self-defense militias, discrimination, and the effects of climate change. Violence is not only physical but intimidation or echoes of violence committed against people from surrounding villages can also be the basis for migration and displacement."*[18]

This sense of forceful uprootedness is experienced by many displaced people. This is a form of harm that contributes to persisting resentment and hostility that can generate future cycles of conflict.

Peacebuilding practitioners must incorporate an understanding of displacement as a critical dimension of conflict within itself, rather than as a result of it. Displacement presents an entry point for peacebuilding programming to transform the conditions of violence that have impacted the lives of migrants globally.[19] By identifying this gap, participants called on peacebuilders to interrogate what a broadened understanding of harm means for the sector.

---

18   Fady Traore's Platform4Dialouge contributions were translated from French.
19   UNHCR (2022). Refugee Statistics | USA for UNHCR (unrefugees.org)

Understanding Global Migration Patterns Through Structural Violence

One of the most cohesive themes that emerged is the view that global migration trends, including instances of irregular mass migration and high levels of economic migration from fragile states, are shaped by structural violence. Participants challenged dominant understandings of forced migration and the dominant legal convention and frameworks, which they see as perpetuating the idea that only certain migrants are deserving of legal protections and humanitarian services.

In discussing wide-ranging catalysts of migration, both related and unrelated structural violence, participants challenged the perceived simplistic distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration. Vani Bhardwaj noted that often

> "The push-and-pull factors are dependent on demographic profile, socio-economic background, and eco-systemic changes. Environmental degradation makes poor, vulnerable households get on the move, but not necessarily voluntarily. On the surface, [the decision to migrate] seems voluntary; what it is, in fact, could be pre-emptive. Thus, we cannot classify voluntary and involuntary migration in [a] rigid binary classification anymore."

Similarly, Clara Villatoro shared her perspective that the entire *"social structure in which these people [who chose to migrate] lived prevented them from meeting basic needs, including safe[ty] and security"* leading them to flee from their homes, often knowing that they will *"face more obstacles and different kinds of violence over and over."*

Dr. Michelle Garred agreed with Bhardwaj and Villatoro writing that: *"the distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration is not a binary,"* but rather:

> "It is more of a spectrum, with many people's experiences reflecting a mix of 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' factors."

She spoke to the problematic nature of this notion in that:

> "Much of the global migration system is based on policies that attempt to make an overly rigid distinction between voluntary and involuntary and are not updated to reflect the changing context of the times... [S]o we have major systemic issues such as people pushed to move by climate change being rejected by destination countries as 'voluntary economic migrants.'"

Villatoro's perspective, which is based on regional expertise in Central America shaped her position that:

> "Even when criminal violence is one of the most highlighted drivers of migration [in the region] on the news, behind the criminal violence there are structural violence issues: criminal governance, corruption, and a whole judiciary system that only offers impunity to the victims of criminal violence, these push people to run away from their country to preserve their lives."

This position was supported by Dr. Garred's personal experience working with migrants in US detention centers and observing the rejection of migrants from Central America seeking asylum. They are:

> "Rejected by the US because violence, due to organized crime and gang activity, does not fit the antiquated legal definition of a 'well-founded fear of persecution.' She described this as *"blatant structural violence"* because *"destination countries are well aware that these arbitrary legal definitions need to be updated, yet they choose not to do so, because it is an easy way to reduce the number of immigrants."*

Practitioners and advocates pushed back on traditional ideas about what violent conflict looks like and who is behind the conflict. They called out authoritative agencies who are hostile towards migrants and displaced people. They also reflected that these agencies may themselves perpetuate conflict.

Dr. Garred expanded on these sentiments by contextualizing the conversation in historical analysis. She wrote that:

> "The entire global migration system can be seen as a manifestation of structural violence that arises from colonialism and neocolonialism. We have 'Western' states that essentially created the modern concept of borders and citizenship, which create 'us' and 'them' categories and restrict movement. Those same states contribute to making life unsafe for people in many contexts by driving climate change and economic inequality, and exacerbating (or directly perpetrating) violence."

Peacebuilders argue that the power imbalance of deciding which migrants qualify for legal protections and humanitarian support is upheld and reinforced by the very states that play a role in catalyzing the migration flows in the first place.

Similarly, Catherine Martha Agwang shared that when it comes to:

> "Any form of migration whether voluntary or involuntary, there are underlying structures which are a driving force."

She added that in her country of Uganda:

> "Currently there are no wars; however, people still move from one place to the other for many different reasons ranging from political, social, economic, religious, tribalism, natural disasters, and so on."

This again shows how the absence of armed conflict does not inherently translate to security and safety. It also shows us that not all who migrate from non-conflict contexts are doing so entirely voluntarily.

Some immigration justice advocates, such as Ariel Zarate, further developed these points to argue that these separatist categories serve to exclude certain migrants from rights and protections more than providing aid and services to those who need them most. Zarate wrote that:

> "Structural violence is the most perennial catalyst."

She consolidated reflections about colonialism and imperialism related to the global migration system and economic motivations for migration. She said:

> "In the current context or historically, exploitative industries and the conscious underdevelopment of countries via colonization and other radicalized or ethnic hierarchies create conditions of deprivation from which migration stems".

She continued by elaborating that this is manifested in the:

> "Lack of employment, inadequate adaptation measures to climate, resource conflicts, and resource capture follow the creation of a global order steeped in iniquity."

Direct violence is not the only form of violence that contributes to forced migration. Structural violence, however, shapes the global geopolitical and economic landscape that underlies international migration patterns. Structural violence, as well as manifestations of social conflicts, including destitution, social exclusion, identity-based violence, and marginalization, should ground theoretical understandings of migratory patterns. They should also be reflected in more expansive legal protections and humanitarian frameworks for migrants.

Mainstream institutions working within migration in Western countries typically relegate these views on migration to the academics or campaigners. Therefore it is quite significant that such a cohesive dialogue around this specific dimension would emerge in a learning exchange representing the perspectives and positions of local practitioners, academics, and advocates.

Acknowledging the role of structural violence in global migration patterns suggests that viewing migration through a peacebuilding lens offers a more holistic and integrated understanding of migration. This approach also provides a more expansive idea of what constitutes 'full agency' in relation to the decision to remain in or migrate from a given context. Most importantly, this approach calls on the peacebuilding sector and the broader humanitarian sector to recognize the complex and layered systems that shape migratory flows. More than addressing direct violence or surface-level needs, peacebuilders can only begin to contend with the violence of forced migration by addressing the root causes that underlie conflict, displacement, and destitution.

A Note on Climate, Conflict, and Migration

In recent decades, the impact of climate change has emerged as an agent of displacement. Rates of forced displacement and migration are only likely to increase as a result of the impact of the climate emergency. Notably, the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, as well as the destruction of natural resources, are making regions uninhabitable and increasing food insecurity. Estimates of how many people have already been forced to migrate due to climate change vary due to the lack of consensus around what constitutes climate change-driven displacement. The World Bank's 2021 Groundswell report estimates that climate change could force 216 million people across six world regions to move within their countries by 2050.[20]

Conflict and environmental degradation have always been closely related. However recently their relationship has become more broadly recognized as a 'threat multiplier.' Climate change is a driver of conflict because it exacerbates existing social, economic, and environmental factors, which increases the risk of conflict or compounds ongoing conflicts.

It is also critical to acknowledge that the poorest and most vulnerable communities – those who have contributed the least to global warming and environmental degradation – are paying the greatest price and are affected most by this phase of the climate crisis.[21] This directly relates to state fragility and the ability to manage and respond to crises. According to a study by The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-

20 Clement, Viviane; Rigaud, Kanta Kumari; de Sherbinin, Alex; Jones, Bryan; Adamo, Susana; Schewe, Jacob; Sadiq, Nian; Shabahat, Elham. (2021) "Groundswell Part 2 : Acting on Internal Climate Migration". World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36248 License: CC BY 3.0 IGO."

21 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) (2020). World Social Report 2020: Inequality In A Rapidly Changing World. https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wpcontent/uploads/sites/22/2020/01/World-Social-Report-2020-FullReport.pdf

Gain) Index, of the 25 countries deemed most vulnerable to climate change, 14 have existing conflicts.[22] This should not be understood as an inherent correlation between conflict and climate change but rather points to how conflict-affected regions are generally less equipped to cope with large-scale emergencies, such as climate change. Already, close to 90% of the world's refugees come from countries that are the most affected by climate change – and the least able to adapt.[23] These states also host the majority of internally displaced people, with estimates of up to 40 million IDPs residing in nations with the highest levels of fragility and vulnerability to the climate crisis. Addressing state fragility is crucial for direct conflict management and transformation, and strengthens the capacity to respond to and manage the challenges that are expected to shape the coming decades.

Those already working around the world to resist and disrupt climate change, especially in conflict-affected regions, are among some of the most affected populations when it comes to the devastating reality of armed conflict. According to a study by Global Witness, murders of environmental activists and land defenders are hitting record highs. In 2020, over 220 people were reportedly killed trying to protect land, rivers, and other ecosystems.[24] Over half of these attacks happened across Colombia, Mexico, and the Philippines, but this is a global trend with instances of murders across various regions internationally. In 2021, over half of the 358 documented human rights defender's activist killings were land defenders and unfortunately, 2022 is on track to surpass this in many of the world's most violent-afflicted regions.[25] Many land defenders who face years of intimidation or who survive attempts at being silenced, are often forced to flee the very communities they sought to protect.

The relationship between climate, conflict, and migration is triangular and integrated. Fragility underlies the intertwined nature of this relationship. As environmental activists continue to sound alarms about the critical time left to prevent a global climate disaster, this urgency has implications for peacebuilding practitioners across the world.

In response, peacebuilding groups in regions affected by environmental degradation, resource protection, and climate change are central to responding to and preventing conflicts. These peacebuilders are increasingly coalescing with environmental protection groups and shifting focus to the protection of land defenders.

22   Global Adaptation Initiative. (2022) "ND-GAIN Country Index". University of Notre Dame. Country Index // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative // University of Notre Dame

23   UNHCR (2021) Climate change link to displacement of most vulnerable is clear: UNHCR

24   Global Witness (2021). "Last Line of Defence". https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/20190/Last_line_of_ defence_-_low_res_-_September_2021.pdf

25   Front Line Defenders. (2021) "Global Analysis 2021 Report". https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/ files/2021_global_analysis_-_final.pdf

Conflict Along Migratory Journeys

When exploring the links between conflict and migration, consideration should be given to how conflict and violence shapes migratory journeys. This is particularly relevant to the journeys of displaced migrants and other vulnerable populations. When the relationship between conflict and migration is discussed, the view of the connection is often limited to how conflict acts as a driver of displacement. Moving beyond, identifying how conflict and violence can occur across migratory journeys as well as upon arrival in a new context presents a new framing of where peacebuilding might play a role.

Migrants, especially those who are forced to flee abruptly with little or no resources, are vulnerable to various forms of violence through their journeys. Jasmin Lilian Diab summarized some of the primary vulnerabilities that migrants encounter, listing how:

> *"Throughout their migration journeys, displaced people are vulnerable to human trafficking, sexual exploitation, to being detained or arrested, as well as to having their money, paperwork, and identification taken away."*

Miriam González, added to this, pointing to how:

> *"In the case of women migrants and applicants for international protection, violence is part of their entire migratory experience: they flee from it, it haunts them on the way, and it receives them in the countries of destination and upon their return to their countries of origin"*, as *"they often experience revictimization in transit countries".*[26]

Notably, the threat of violence was identified as coming from both state and non-state actors.

Regarding the criminalization of migrants by state actors, Diab also argued that hostile policies towards migrants could be interpreted as forms of conflict in themselves. Diab wrote that: *"conflict en route to destination countries may arise from altercations with different [branches of] law enforcement,"* such as border patrols and/or non-authorized vigilantes. Diab, among other participants, invoked language which positioned state agencies as conflict actors. This is a view that fits with a small but growing body of research looking into:

> *"Re-bordering practices as ongoing performances of conflict between various groups including state authorities, border security agents, migrants, migrant supporters, smugglers, international organizations, lawyers, advocates, and others."*[27]

This analysis is highly interesting because it suggests that conflict continues in destination countries, many of which are nations not categorized by the international community as being conflict-affected.

Beyond the vulnerability to various forms of danger and the violence at borders, participants touched upon how the circumstances surrounding difficult transit journeys can also lead to conflict amongst migrants. As Vani Bhardwaj noted: the *"migrant community itself is never homogenous."* Their access to resources and different avenues of migration channels are shaped by class, ability, and gender, among many other identities and experiences.

Diab expanded on this by writing that conflict along migrant journeys can happen *"as people become increasingly vulnerable and competitive over limited resources."* This is especially true for people fleeing instances of sudden displacement. Similar to conflict-affected regions all over the world, insecurity often underlies violence. The scarcity that shapes

---

26   Miriam Gonzalez' Platform4Dialouge contributions were translated to English from Spanish.

27   Guillermo Candiz, Tanya Basok. (2021) "Intensity and uncertainty: Performing border conflicts at the US-Mexico borderlands". Population, Space and Place. Volume 27, Issue 9 e2441. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2441

many migrant experiences can catalyze similar tensions and reactions.

This brief discussion on how violence can shape conflict within migration journeys, particularly for migrants who are fleeing with little resources, demonstrates how peacebuilding practitioners could identify conflict in relation to the passage of migrants within and across borders. This invites the sector to expand its focus; to facilitate peace processes that could mitigate or prevent the violent conflict that migrants are likely to experience during the migration process.

Case Study: Acts of Violence and Clashes at the US- Mexico Border

In September 2021, images of United States Customs and Border Patrol agents charging their horses at Haitian migrants while appearing to swing around their horse reins like a lasso received coverage from global mainstream media.[28]

Many have drawn parallels between images of this violent clash with historical representations of slavery – which was only abolished in the US in 1865 – and other instances of state-sanctioned violence against Black people in the US. Highly violent racialized policing practices, by Border Patrol's own admission, are meant to discourage Haitian migrants from crossing the US border.[29] Despite widespread condemnation, the agents on horseback have their defenders too. This is reflective of the highly polarized tension around migration and the vitriol that many Americans feel toward migrants, particularly Black and Brown migrants, traveling across the US-Mexico border. Although this clash is one of the few high-profile instances of how state agencies employ violent tactics to uphold border management, it is far from being the only case where it appears that border enforcement is upheld through tactics of war.

In regions across the Southern border known to be harsh and deadly for migrants attempting to cross, United States border patrol agents and vigilantes routinely vandalize containers of water and other supplies left for migrants by humanitarian volunteers. A report published by two Arizona-based human rights groups, La Coalición de Derechos Humanos (The Coalition of Human Rights) and No More Deaths, outlined how agents sabotage and interfere with humanitarian aid and relief efforts, to support the safe passage of migrants crossing through the desert.[30]

For example, between March 2012 and December 2015, volunteers with the groups found water gallons vandalized 415 times on average twice a week damaging 3,586 gallons in an 800 sq mile patch of Sonoran Desert south-west of Tucson, Arizona. These humanitarian volunteers also documented instances of sabotage to other forms of supplies including food, clothes, blankets, and more. The report claims that volunteers supporting the humanitarian aid efforts and healthcare professionals providing medical care and assistance to migrants are often harassed by agents and militia border enforcer groups.

28   Rose, Jose. (2021) "An inquiry into Border Agents clashing with Haitians at the border still ongoing". NPR
29   Dr. Ewing, Walter and Murdza, Katy. (2021). "Special Report: The Legacy of Racism within the U.S. Border Patrol". American Immigration Council. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/the_legacy_of_racism_within_the_u.s._border_patrol.pdf
30   The Coalition of Human Rights and No More Deaths. (2020) "Disappeared: How US Border Enforcement Agencies Are Fueling a Missing Persons Crisis". thedisappearedreport.org

In these stretches of open desert, with frequently scorching temperatures, these actions condemn people to die of thirst, starvation, dehydration, or other exposure-related injury and death. While interference of humanitarian aid may not be official agency protocol, it is a routine practice in line with the broader hostility that shapes US border enforcement policy. These actions make the border entry points mass graveyards for crossers.[31] According to the Border Patrol, close to 8,000 migrants have turned up dead on the Southern border between 1998 and 2020.[32] The International Organization for Migration, as well as other research and advocacy groups, have pushed back, noting that this, like all figures related to migrant deaths, is an undercount.[33] However, even by the Border Patrol's own estimates, this *"is a rate of about one migrant death per day, every day"* for the 22 years since the government began recording US-Mexico border deaths.[34] Unfortunately, these figures are only increasing as 2021 recorded an all-time annual high since 1998.[35] Given these rates of mass death, obstruction of humanitarian aid by state and non-state actors seems especially violent and targeted.

> *Many academics and practitioners understand that "controlling whether and how humanitarian aid reaches civilians in need" is employed by those perpetrating violent conflict. They do this as a "tactic that deliberately harms civilians for political and military gain".[36]*

While this practice is known in terms of regimes inciting large-scale obstruction of aid, the parallels we can draw and apply to descriptions outlined in reports of clashes at the US-Mexico border are notable, despite happening on a smaller, more individual scale.

Between instances of direct physical violence towards migrants and indirect violence through the obstruction of lifesaving aid, it is not inconceivable to think of border enforcement methods as tactics of conflict.

*This case study is drawn from desk research outside of the learning exchange to provide a more in-depth example of conflict-fueled interactions between migrants and state actors, which was heavily referenced throughout the learning exchange.

31 Gonzalez, Daniel. (2021) "Border crossers, and the desert that claims them". USA Today Network – The Wall. Border crossers, and the desert that claims them (usatoday.com)

32 CSR Report: Known Migrant Deaths, Southwest Border, 1985-2011: Source: University of Houston Center for Immigration Research; Jimenez, "Humanitarian Crisis," 2009; CBP Office of Congressional Affairs.

33 Missing Migrants Project. (2022) "2021 Americas overview of missing migrants data- executive summary". International Organization for Migration. https://missingmigrants.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl601/files/publication/file/MMP%20 annual%20regional%20overview%202021%20LAC_Executive%20Summary-ENG_0.pdf

34 Verini, James. (2020). "How US Policy Turned the Sonoran Desert Into a Graveyard for Migrants". NYTimes. https:// www.nytimes.com/2020/08/18/magazine/border-crossing.html

35 IOM. (2021). "Rising Migrant Deaths Top 4,400 This Year: IOM Records More Than 45,000 Since 2014" | International Organization for Migration

36 Flintoft, Caroline. (2018) "Misery as Strategy: The Human Cost of Conflict" |International Crisis Group

Conflict Upon Arrival: Hostility, Tensions, and Polarization

Increasingly, migration is coming to be understood as a factor that drives conflict just as much as it is a consequence of conflict. Across many contexts, migration is a polarizing political issue, with anxieties related to population movements frequently being exploited by populist movements.[37] Framing these hostile reactions and the violence that migrants face when arriving in new places as conflict, helps us to identify intersections where peace processes could be employed to address this violence. Many practitioners across destination countries increasingly understand this conflict to be at the heart of peacebuilding and migration.

Peacebuilders recognize how collective antagonism towards a community drives tensions that can evolve into violence. Fady Traore wrote that:

> "Hostile reactions to migrants or displaced people from host communities are mainly motivated by fear and prejudice. These perceptions leave little room for peaceful cohabitation or social reintegration of migrants," and it is these "tensions that can degenerate into conflicts".[38]

Adding to this, Jasmin Lilian Diab provided further explanation of the types of concerns underlying this fear and prejudice:

> "Competition over resources, competition over job opportunities, underlying racism, and historical/political conflicts, as well as an overall perception that migrants and displaced populations bring crime and unwanted cultural practices with them to the host country."

These are perceptions that perpetuate negative reactions to migrants. It is often a combination of stoked anxieties, existing bias and bigotry and real or perceived economic insecurity that shapes tensions between migrants and host communities.

Practitioners and advocates are relentless in their emphasis on how economic conditions and state fragility are often directly tied to conflict. Peacebuilders from the Global South described their experiences observing how tensions between host and migrant communities are often related to economic struggles and the notion that migrants present competition for limited resources.

Grace Atim described how, whilst working in refugee camps across West Africa, conflict can arise between internally displaced populations and host communities. She mentioned that this is often directly related to the perception that resources are already 'overstretched' prior to migrants arriving. She explained that:

> "Most times [when] people are internally displaced, and they are forced to relocate or move to communities that are already stretched in terms of scarce resources" such as "water, land, food, housing, farmland, accommodation," and other basic needs that are often limited or difficult to access in fragile states.

Host communities might be concerned about having to "share the already limited resources" with the migrants coming into their regions, leading to brooding and negative attitudes.

Similarly, Andrea Rudnik recalled her experiences working with migrants living in crowded conditions, describing how:

> "OIften people arrive from different countries with varying expectations of how to access food, shelter, and basic needs."

---

37 Talani, L.S. (2021). Populism and Migration. In: The International Political Economy of Migration in the Globalization Era. International Political Economy Series. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79321-0_9

38 Fady Traore's Platform4Dialouge contributions were translated from French.

This often leads to panic and resentment when expectations are unmet. As peacebuilders know too well, insecurity can be a factor in fueling conflict but isn't the only factor present that directly triggers violence. This sense of scarcity is sometimes weaponized to stoke existing anxieties and prejudices targeting socially marginalized groups, such as migrant communities.

Even in states that are not considered to be affected by insecurity or poverty, the narratives of scarcity and competition can still be successfully wielded to marginalize migrant groups. Throughout this learning exchange, there was an emphasis on the pervasive nature of White supremacist views which inform much of the violence. This means both structural and interpersonal views that non-White migrants encounter. Many of the participants offered anecdotes about how racialized groups are constructed as foreigners, even when they have generational roots in a given context. Often these 'foreigners' will be scapegoated for the lack of opportunities and resources that 'host' communities face. Ariel Zarate offered the term 'otherization' to describe this and highlighted how it is only exacerbated for migrants and displaced people who really are newcomers to a community. She added that:

> *"Being forced into an identity as a 'migrant' that is contested, politicized and manipulated without any consultation or consideration of the human elements behind the numbers" and being met with reactions of hatred or fear "only adds to the psychological turmoil of fleeing physical violence and/or deprivation and the danger of the journey itself".*

Prejudices based on racism and religious or cultural differences are often justified in defense of existing social fabrics that migrants are accused of disrupting.

When harmful narratives around migrants prevail, hostile reactions from both individuals and institutions have direct implications for future cycles of conflict and displacement. For example, Vani Bhardwaj pointed out how the:

> *"emergence of far-right narrative building alienates the migrant not only from their displaced origin but even from their place of destination".*

Bhardwaj explains that this alienation "amounts to double or triple displacement" referring to how migrants may be "pushed out from one geographic location to the next and so on".

Sawssan Abou-Zahr and Jasmin Lilian Diab contextualized this analysis by describing how *"rejection and racism"* manifest in various forms, from *"physical assaults and imprisonment"* to *"barriers to accessing rights and citizenship"* leading disenfranchised refugees to *"embark on dangerous journeys to seek asylum elsewhere."*

Often, the fact that migrants do not stay in the first country they reach is used to discredit the urgency of migratory motivations. This undermines claims of displacement, to deny asylum seekers the legal protections associated with refugee status. The explanation outlined by local peacebuilding practitioners about how and why this double and triple migration occurs is critical in disrupting that narrative. Moreover, it is also critical to respond to these challenges, and forge a more comprehensive understanding of migratory journeys. Beyond some of the more intuitive examples of how tensions between migrant and host communities can enter into conflict, participants again pushed for an expansion in terms of what is understood as violence and conflict, as it relates to migration. Dr. Michelle Garred suggested that:

> *"One key aspect of conflict and violence while en route, and even after arriving in a destination country, is the policy and practice of holding asylum seekers in detention."*

She pointed to how:

> *"jailing people who have not been accused of any crime, under horrible conditions to the violation of their human rights and holding them for months and years"*

is a form of normalized state violence that replicates harm across the span of migrant journeys. This reinforces the trauma faced by people fleeing desperate circumstances. Similarly, Jasmin Lilian Diab described instances of family separation at borders and as part of different asylum processes as a form of violence that can be likened to the tactics employed by conflict actors for intimidation and psychological violence during war.

The rising politicization of migration increasingly serves as a central component of cultural wars, toxic polarization, the increasing frequency of hate crimes, and right-wing populist movements. The tensions surrounding the divided positions and attitudes around migration will likely continue escalating into different forms of violence. By approaching these tensions as a form of conflict, peacebuilding practitioners will be able to employ peace processes that might disrupt this to maintain political stability, social cohesion, and institutional resilience across polarized destination countries.

Part 2: Nexus Between Peacebuilding and Migration

Where violence, fragility, and conflict shape spheres of migration, peace is absent. Dr. John Bosco captured the relationship between peace and violent experiences of migration in an anecdote, sharing:

"If you ask a lot of kids in the [refugee] camp to write poems, without giving them a hint, most of them will write poems about peace... and that's the universal thing within the refugee and migrant communities in all marginalized societies, where the first thing that comes to mind when you ask them to write a poem is actually peace [...]. And if you ask them to draw, they'll often draw guns and the consequences of conflict – the lack of peace in a way and how that dramatically changes their life for the worse."

Like Dr. Bosco, peacebuilding practitioners, humanitarian workers, and immigration justice advocates increasingly champion the idea that peace can be understood as the fundamental quest behind migration. When peace is achieved, migration can truly be a matter of free human mobility, rather than a dangerous and often painful decision driven by conflict, disaster, and desperation. The following is a summary of some of the opportunities that participants identified and explored for peacebuilding to play a role in achieving these conditions.

Preventing Displacement

Peacebuilding can and does play a role in preventing some level of displacement. However, practitioners note that peacebuilding lacks intention and is often limited in scope relative to the opportunities for engagement. Peacebuilders are therefore presented with an opportunity to improve, expand on, and develop new programs, activities, and initiatives to formally approach the issue of displacement.

When pressed on the connection, many participants suggest that there is an inherent connection between peacebuilding and preventing displacement. Sawssan Abou-Zahr shared a view that:

> *"In theory peace is the antidote to [forced] migration. If there is no war, conflict, invasion, political persecution, people could seek a better life at home without leaving their countries and taking high risks in doing so."*

This captured the views of many participants who feel that peacebuilders, and especially within locally-led peacebuilding, are already mitigating and preventing some level of displacement and forced migration from conflict-affected regions.

When grappling with how peacebuilding plays a role in preventing displacement, practitioners offered a broad range of examples of what this looks like in practice. They also outlined a range of more general ideas. For example, Lumenge Lubangu suggested that peacebuilders might be well positioned to conduct conflict analyses of situations moving towards displacement in order to gain a clear understanding of *"the long-term, medium-term, and short-term consequences of this migration movement on the local populations,"* as well as the dynamics contributing towards conflict among the displaced and the host communities. Lumenge

emphasized how peacebuilders can play a role in coordinating between various stakeholders, including the *"International community, governments, and civil society organizations, to find appropriate solutions."* Peacebuilders can ensure that this coordination features 'bottom-up' collaboration so that local communities are central to this framework.

Similarly, Lucie Bello shared that tools of peacebuilding such as facilitating *"dialogue between the parties… can help to heal the broken social fabric and bring back a harmonious coexistence between communities and parties that distrust each other."*[39] She wrote that: in order to get ahead of displacement, peacebuilders must identify mounting tensions and implement tools to:

> *"Restore [conflict actors'] ways of living together… and create a climate of trust between the parties so that mutual acceptance will follow and forced displacement will end."*

Pietro and Dr. Bosco discussed how peacebuilding can prevent recruitment into armed groups, particularly for young people. In these instances, peacebuilding can disrupt displacement as it offers a pathway to safety for those who might otherwise have to flee to escape coerced involvement.

Despite a consensus that peacebuilding already plays a critical role in preventing and mitigating some level of displacement, many local practitioners and humanitarian workers struggle to name specific examples. As Dr. Michelle Garred noted, although she is confident that *"peacebuilding can help to prevent the violence that leads to displacement"* and that *"this is already happening in the here and now,"* she believes that *"we do not always articulate it as such".*

---

39   Lucie Bello's Platform4Dialouge contributions were translated from French.

This is reflective of how displacement prevention suffers from the dilemma that the broader peacebuilding sector is grappling with: how to measure and track the impact of peacebuilding. Pietro Uzochukwu Macleo, a local peacebuilder, described the difficulty he and others face to *"measure what you have prevented when it comes to peacebuilding."* **He elaborated that this** *"major challenge we peacebuilders face in this discipline because our deliverables are mostly intangible."*

As Pietro notes, it is much easier to measure negative metrics of a conflict than to quantify the successes of peacekeeping. As such, the ripple effects of this peacebuilding largely go unmeasured, such as instances where forced migration and displacement were prevented because people felt secure to remain in their homes and communities.

Peacebuilders can be optimistic about their potential role in preventing displacement and forced migration. Viewing their roles as a form of harm prevention, and the protection of human dignity, rather than a means of preventing migration is an important starting point. From here, peacebuilders have an opportunity to lead, and to shift the peacebuilding and development sector to adopt new ways of approaching migration.

Social Cohesion Between Migrants and Host Communities

Building social cohesion is a fundamental peacebuilding priority across a number of contexts. It supports efforts to address inter-communal tensions, marginalization, and social exclusion and is key to ending violent conflict and building sustainable peace. Peacebuilding can be applied to mitigate tensions between migrant and host communities to curb the potential for conflict at the end of migratory journeys.

In the context of migration, building social cohesion helps to develop strong relationships and a sense of solidarity between migrant and host communities. Giulia McPherson, who leads advocacy for refugee services, offered a summary of how building social cohesion among migrants and host communities largely addresses xenophobia and prejudice. She, and others from the humanitarian sector, explained that currently, most approaches to resettlement prioritize essential needs including housing, food, and medical care. While these services are critical to support migrants and refugees, they also only begin to address broader challenges such as creating safe and peaceful conditions for migrants in their new contexts. This is an entry point for peacebuilders to coalesce with the humanitarian sector to address how hostile reactions to migrants and refugees shapes transit and arrival experiences. She wrote that:

> *"Cultural and economic anxieties which fuel xenophobia can be addressed with a focus on building bridges through education and among youth, and on creating spaces of hospitality and welcome. Priority must be given to building the capacity of communities themselves to mobilize to work for reconciliation and social cohesion."*

Vani Bhardwaj added to this perspective, pointing out that while structural change is required for institutional and systemic marginalization of migrants and displaced people, on an interpersonal level, one of the ways to *"erode the xenophobia"* **that migrants** face is to employ the peacebuilding practice of creating space for *"proactive communication channels between host and migrant communities."* Vani was among many participants across the learning exchange to emphasize the value of facilitating dialogue as an integral part of the peacebuilding approach to address xenophobia and improve relationships between migrants and the communities they enter.

Sawssan Abou-Zahr helpfully provided examples of how local peacebuilders in her country are already doing this work. She shared:

> "In the Lebanese context, local peacebuilders worked to help and support Syrian refugees" by serving "as a 'buffer zone' to protect them and stand with them against waves of racism and confrontation with underprivileged host communities already struggling to make a living. There was some work done on inclusive economic activities that would allow them to work together in agriculture instead of competing, as well as joint cooking and embroidery projects for women and joint playgrounds for children, in addition to training on communication skills and conflict resolution."

These activities and programs allow for meaningful collaboration while facilitating healthy interaction between different groups. These types of examples can be replicated across all contexts where host communities have anxieties about how migrants may shake up the social fabric that they are used to.

Social cohesion is one component to meaningfully address hostility, tension, and polarization. Supporting greater social cohesion helps to address the persistence of some conflicts as well as the creation of new ones. Although this work will be diverse in nature it is becoming increasingly necessary in most places. From states which are typically categorized as under-developed or conflict-affected, to states with some of the largest economies and political influence. It is this work that helps to diffuse the tensions that sometimes turn into full-blown violence and conflict. By helping to address fundamental grievances related to the marginalization of migrants and displaced people, peacebuilders can play a role in ensuring that migrant and host communities can live in peace together.

Case Study: Social Cohesion and Development in Yemen

Search for Common Ground (Search) recently completed the Promoting Social Cohesion and Conflict Transformation through Insider Mediators program. The program was designed to assist internally displaced people (IDP) in Yemen, specifically those in Al-Shamayatin and Al-Ma'afer (sub-regions: Bani Mohammed and Ash-Shu'obah) who had occupied facilities used for schooling, health, and literacy. Search's team of three Insider Mediators initiated a community dialogue process in Al-Shamayatin, convening 35 participants. This resulted in a solution-based understanding that an alternative place of residence needed to be found for the IDPs.

After the agreement, Search provided financial support to build a facility that could provide temporary accommodation for 107 IDPs. With this resolution, public services resumed for 10,000 local residents. Similarly, Search's three-person team convened 182 participants for community dialogue regarding IDP influx and rising contention over basic resources. Through the agreed outcomes, Search provided financial support to renovate the water source by establishing a 50m water reservoir and installing a 600-meter pipeline to deliver water for 800 people.

Exit Strategies as a Peacebuilding Priority

One of the primary concerns participants raised throughout this learning exchange is the view that current approaches and responses to migration are plagued by loose ends and temporary fixes. Our consultations included a brief exploration of the potential role of peacebuilding in improving closure to migratory experiences for migrants, especially those whose journey was catalyzed by displacement. The following is a brief exploration of what successful "exit strategies" might look like and how peacebuilding can play a role.

A large part of this discussion focused specifically on exit strategies for displaced people living in limbo. This includes those who may be living in camps, navigating legal protections or facing multiple instances of displacement. Several participants cross the learning exchange shared firsthand accounts of the shortcomings of the resettlement system. Many shared encounters with displaced people who spent decades in camps, asylum-seekers whose claims had been on hold for years or migrants who made several claims to be reunited with their homes and loved ones without support.

While these challenges largely point to the need to improve the ways that resettlement and humanitarian agencies operate, it also highlights another entry point for peacebuilders to connect their work to support displaced people: peacebuilding can create safe conditions for those who want to return. This was raised by Merwyn De Mello, a migrant, humanitarian aid worker, and human rights advocate with vast experience working with refugee and migrant communities through a faith-based framework of justice who said:

> *"There is something that needs to be said in this dialogue about the 'right to return' of migrants to their country of origin.[...] While the right to leave or migrate is inalienable, so should be the right to return to the country of origin."*

This assertion was uplifted and amplified throughout the consultation, suggesting that

approaches to migration through a peacebuilding lens could offer not just safety but the rectification of the initial harm of displacement.

Despite the consensus supporting the 'right to return' and working towards conditions of peace, practitioners recognize that in many cases returning may not be possible or desired. As Abou-Zahr discussed in a regional context, she wondered what it would take those who insist on sending migrants back to *"consider that it might be impossible for some refugees to return home."* She referenced refugees from Syria, Palestine, and Afghanistan, and pointed out that in reality, many displaced people would likely be *"at risk of imprisonment or persecution"* if they attempted to return. Even beyond those for whom a path to peace and reconciliation may allow them to return, repatriation may not be the objective of some displaced people. For a number of reasons, from trauma to having to adjust to learning a new cultural context, people who experienced displacement may not wish to return. Therefore, alongside an interest in restoring peace, practitioners viewed improving resettlement processes as an essential peacebuilding priority of equal significance.

In discussing the role of peacebuilders in facilitating displacement exit strategies, the strongest theme that emerged from the discussion is the opportunity to apply peace processes to build the existing capacities of migrants and displaced people by promoting self-reliance. Being forcibly displaced by conflict, as well as facing circumstances desperate enough to motivate migration tends to be highly traumatic. These experiences can leave migrants feeling stripped of their agency. This harm is reinforced when responses to migration and mechanisms of humanitarian aid keep recipients in a dependent state of need.

Jigyasa Gulati reflected on her own experience working with refugees, of the need to expand capacity bridging and empowerment programs. She described how despite having *"crossed borders, while earning livelihoods to provide for their*

families and adapting to new contexts," many of the refugees she met did not *"realize their own strengths and resilience."* Despite facing difficult circumstances which catalyze migration, struggles throughout transit and challenges settling into new communities, migrants and refugees persevere and provide. Gulati, and many other participants, therefore developed the view that *"peacebuilding could help people in regaining trust in their own capabilities and capacities"* as a means of creating long-term solutions.

Dr. Bosco articulated this issue in the following way:

> *"While humanitarian actions have historically helped local governments and the vulnerable populations to get out of very troubling situations (relief services: food, shelter, sanitation, medications, etc.), the community empowerment and exit strategies have been missing, plunging poor countries and their people into chronic foreign-aid dependency."*

Some humanitarian workers have suggested that approaches to integrate displaced people into destination communities can include a number of different activities. For example this might include providing language courses, hosting employment fairs, and offering other labor and skill-based support. Peacebuilders recognize that these types of economic empowerment programs have the potential to strengthen horizontal and vertical relationships for refugees and migrants in the resettlement process and therefore begin the process of enabling the pillars of peace to flourish.

Dr. Christina Bache explained that services like this are essential to preventing future cycles of violence and displacement. They can address people who may have become disenfranchised and socially excluded, which often underlies tensions that can evolve into conflicts. However, she and several participants noted that often these humanitarian approaches fall short because they fail to account for more profound barriers to true integration and social cohesion. Aid services and programs not only require expansion and improvement to reach more significant numbers of people, but they also need to be recognized as only a part, and not the whole solution.

Migrant Inclusion in Peace Processes

Population movements – both voluntary and involuntary – play a role in peace and conflict. Peace and migration in this sense, is not solely connected to intervening in forced migration, but also to consider migration as an element of all efforts.

An analysis of migrant participation in peace processes conducted by Swisspeace found that failure to consult with migrants, address their needs, and to help find solutions to their displacement, can further escalate existing tensions or contribute to new ones – largely undermining peacebuilding efforts. To ensure migrants and displaced people have meaningful inclusion in peace processes we must acknowledge the complexity of migratory experiences. We should also recognise the diversity of identities and views among migrants and work to understand how these dynamics can impact their participation in peace processes.

Dr. Garred pointed out that ensuring migrant inclusion in peace processes is not an entirely new or separate aim. She shared her view that:

> *"the consistent, robust practice of context analysis and conflict sensitivity would help to ensure that migrants and displaced people are consistently included in peacebuilding processes. Those basic practices push us to take a deeper look at the context, understand who is here (both visible and hidden), and take action to ensure inclusion."*

Merwyn De Mello responded in agreement, affirming the critical nature of adopting a 'nothing about us without us' commitment to reconciliation and post-conflict peace processes. He wrote that when building a table of stakeholders to respond and work to transform conflict: *"to this table need to come from the voices of those impacted – the migrants, refugees, IDPs"* who are well positioned not only to *"preempt situations"* that may lead to future conflict, but also to develop strategies and responses to manage conflict and lead efforts to address their impact.

Ensuring migrant inclusion and participation in peace processes can also help to contribute to a sense of closure and healing for individuals. As Vani Bhardwaj pointed out: *"the oppressed must feel that they are indeed heard,"* and by failing to address how displaced people who have been forced to flee have been oppressed, resentment and disenfranchisement are only allowed to blister. Instead, by creating spaces to listen, document, and respond to these instances, is critical to restoring communal and inner peace. As Vani suggested, something as simple as *"active listening of local grievances brings holistic healing of psycho-social trauma."* This can be a form of breaking down resentment and breaking cycles of tensions and violence. These approaches are not only essential for healing, but also to break down factors that might alienate migrants and refugees from socio-political participation. Spaces for dialogue are one way to ensure that displaced people and migrants can be involved in peace and reconciliation processes.

Case Study: Diaspora Peacebuilding- How Migrants and Children of Immigrants Become Transnational Peacebuilders

Our consultation included discussions on the role of diaspora communities in affecting their original contexts. Sawssan Abou-Zahr noted that sometimes diaspora communities can rally the world around significant events, contributing to her view that: *"the Lebanese diaspora is very active lobbying for peace, justice, and accountability in Lebanon."* She also noted how these communities can support mobilization around significant events, writing about the campaigning role of the Lebanese diaspora: *"after the 2020 devastating Beirut blast, as well as advocating for change and supporting the opposition in the upcoming elections."*

This concept was explored more deeply in a joint interview with Patrice and Pietro, two friends and colleagues involved with local and transnational peacebuilding efforts. Patrice Wellesley Cole is a London-based immigration lawyer, heavily involved with global peacebuilding and human rights defenders. The daughter of two immigrants from Sierra Leone, she shared her personal experience of being connected to a diaspora community in the United Kingdom and how this shapes her life-long passion for contributing to peace processes; both in her family's country of origin and the broader West African Region. Patrice grew up intimately aware of how conflict-induced migration shapes life trajectories and a sense of uprootedness. Throughout her career in law and human rights, Patrice has been involved in peacebuilding and human rights defense in England and Sierra Leone. She contributes to transnational movements for peace and justice through advocacy and awareness raising.

Patrice described supporting peace movements in Sierra Leone and across Africa through formal channels of civic engagement. This includes activities such as petitioning her elected officials and lobbying efforts to affect the UK's foreign policy, aid, and political engagement with Sierra Leone. On an informal level, she raises awareness of the conflict that shapes her family's ancestral home, as well as conflicts that continue to displace people around the world.

Her friend and fellow Rotarian based in Nigeria, Pietro, also works with Community Voices of Peace and Pluralism in Africa, as well as many other local peacebuilding initiatives. Pietro affirmed the value and importance of this type of solidarity. Pietro commented that often certain *"diaspora residents have lots of influence on local governments,"* and that, *"for better or for worse,"* often diaspora communities will have the opportunity to wield wealth they built in their new context to influence politics in their place of origin. Patrice then expanded on this by acknowledging that often, diaspora communities enjoy a higher level of safety and security in advocating for change and criticizing regimes. She said:

> *"It is not equal, the world is not balanced, but I think it's our privilege duty in the [Global] North to make sure that the world does become a more equal world. As diasporan Africans or Asians, etc., we need to do our bit."*

This personal anecdote and dynamic between two friends and colleagues working together thousands of miles away highlights a broader theme of solidarity. Diaspora communities can, and do, influence transnational movements for peace and justice. They can cultivate a level of awareness and intervention from communities and institutions that would otherwise be totally un-engaged with struggles for peace.

*This case study is drawn directly from input and dialogue developed within the learning exchange.

Room for Further Research

The intersection of peace and migration encompasses a broad and complex range of dimensions. While this report seeks to provide a starting point in some of the reflection and analysis around links between peacebuilding and migration, there are a number of relevant factors that this report only began to scratch the surface of.

The following are some of the considerations that are crucial for developing more comprehensive and holistic peacebuilding approaches related to migration:

Urbanization. In many conflict-affected regions, migration to cities is a major dynamic. Rural to urban migration flows can exacerbate tensions and fragile relations, often devolving into further conflict and/ or the marginalization of minority groups. Mega-cities are often places where conflict is playing out and peacebuilding is necessary. Peacebuilding approaches should enable cities to grow sustainably, driving social cohesion and equity for communities of origin and migrants arriving to these urban contexts.

Diaspora. Despite being physically removed from a conflict-affected region, diaspora communities can- and often do- play significant roles in conflict environments. Leaders within diaspora communities can play a major role in supporting transnational peacebuilding and mobilizing solidarity with peacebuilders on the ground. Considering that peacebuilders and human rights activists are among some of the most vulnerable to facing conflict-induced displacement, it is critical to recognize the agency, expertise, and leadership within diaspora communities.

Eroded social cohesion, including gender and family structures in origin communities. Mass and irregular migration fundamentally change the makeup of contexts impacted by outward exodus. When conflict, or other catalyzing events, lead to high levels of displacement and outward migration, those who remain in the community grapple with the aftermath of these population movements. From the household to the community at large, social dynamics- including gender roles- are disrupted and changed. Thus, the need to empower social cohesion is not limited to destination contexts but is also a peacebuilding priority in origin communities.

Gender dynamics. Women and other marginalized genders face unique challenges and vulnerabilities within experiences of displacement and migration. A gender lens is crucial to both peacebuilding practices and comprehensive humanitarian aid work for migrants; this remains true at the intersection of these arenas.

Children and Young People. Within existing peacebuilding and humanitarian frameworks, there are gaps in terms of the inclusion of youth, as well as in terms of responses that fail to account for the specific needs of children and youth impacted by displacement or other complex migratory experiences.

Academics across peacebuilding and migration are developing an understanding of the links between these two sectors. It is also for practitioners to begin to develop more integrated approaches to bridge both peacebuilding and migration. As peacebuilders develop strategies to engage with migration, further reflection, research, and analysis is essential to help shape their approach. With a strong focus on the relationship between violence, conflict, and migration.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Local peacebuilding practitioners, humanitarian workers, and immigration justice advocates share an optimistic view that peacebuilding already plays a critical role to help address and disrupt some of the forms of violence that shape global migration.

However, the connections between peacebuilding and migration are complex and broad in scope. By applying a lens of peacebuilding, we see some significant gaps in the sector's engagement.

Applying a conflict analysis approach to the catalysts of irregular migration, the dangerous journey that migrants often face, and the oppression that they face upon arrival in a destination, highlights several areas where peacebuilding, especially locally-led peacebuilding, can and should be utilized to address this violence.

The nuanced experiences of migrants will present different challenges in each case. While some commonalities exist across migratory experiences, those fleeing conflict will have unique needs compared to those fleeing a natural disaster or famine. Other considerations such as regional context, cultural and racial identities, and language

skills will add complexity to the right approach necessary to meet the needs of each person. However, the cohesive analysis within this learning exchange resulted in some general principles and entry points that peacebuilders can adopt.

The following are some general recommendations that developed. These can serve as a groundwork for how peacebuilders think and engage with migration. Some of these recommendations also offer the perspectives of local peacebuilders in relation to how migration agencies and other stakeholders might strengthen links between peace and migration.

1. **Incorporate displacement and irregular migration flows into conflict analysis**
   The peacebuilding sector should incorporate the mapping of displacement flows into conflict analysis. Agencies and organizations should coordinate with local practitioners in regions with high

levels of displacement as well as regions with high levels of migrant entry. This is intended to co-develop stronger programs with local and international organizations. In instances of violent conflict where displacement occurs, peacebuilders can use their expertise to understand whether displacement is occurring as a tool or consequence of the conflict. This understanding can support approaches that respond appropriately and mitigate this violence. Additionally, as migrant populations are never homogenous, they should not be overlooked in what stake or position these communities might have in relation to ongoing conflicts.

2. **Acknowledge and include those who have been displaced by conflict in reconciliation processes**
Acknowledging and addressing the harm of displacement as a result of violent conflict in reconciliation processes can go a long way in healing communities from the violence they experienced. As an example of what this looks like in practice, a case study within the Swisspeace report outlines an effort to include migrants and displaced persons in Colombia in truth and reconciliation processes. The three million people who have fled Colombia and the seven million internally displaced people are often left out of peace and reconciliation processes, despite their relationship and influence on ongoing conflict dynamics. In recognition of this gap, the Colombian Truth Commission includes migrant and displaced people in their mapping and testimony collection initiative by including an international region. This approach in the broader post-war truth and reconciliation creates space for internally displaced Colombian people, as well as those who are part of the Colombian diaspora, to participate in conflict transformation and peace processes. The Truth Commission commemorates those impacted by violent conflict, and seeks out truth and testimony as a pathway toward accountability and justice.

3. **Ensure the inclusion and participation of migrant communities in peace processes**
Depending on migrants' and displaced persons' position in relation to conflict, *"failure to consult with migrants, to address their needs, and to find solutions to their displacement can further escalate existing tensions or contribute to new ones,"* largely undermining peacebuilding efforts (KOFF, Swisspeace 2019). To ensure migrants' and displaced persons' meaningful inclusion in peace processes across global contexts and the various stages of migrant journeys, actors must acknowledge the complexity of migratory experiences, the diversity of identities and views among migrants, and understand how that complexity impacts their participation in peace processes.

4. **Apply conflict analysis lens to understand the violence of dehumanization of migrants**
Recognize and address how the dehumanization of migrant communities through rhetoric, policy, and the exploitation of cultural anxieties normalizes and exacerbates violence toward migrants globally, which then implicitly condones oppression of migrants and displaced people. By promoting the application of a conflict analysis lens, peacebuilders can help the broader public to recognize how this is contributing toward rising discrimination and conflict across destination countries.

5. **Raise awareness and share knowledge around the complex nature of conflict to help design responses and solutions to instances of displacement**
Peacebuilders, especially local practitioners, are often better positioned than international organizations and external entities to understand the intricacies and motivations of conflict actors in a given context. While some approaches to migration and displacement might be most effectively handled by international agencies, peacebuilders can share knowledge relevant to designing comprehensive responses. For example, while the task of designing large-

scale exit strategies for refugees seeking safety requires large-scale intervention from international humanitarian agencies and policymakers, the expertise and lens that peacebuilders can provide can help to shape context-specific solutions to displacement.

6. **Nothing about us without us**
The voices and participation of local peacebuilders and displaced people themselves in developing responses to conflict and displacement can go a long way towards creating responses that are comprehensive, just, and sustainable, and should be a sine qua non for good practice in responding to and developing programs related to situations of forced migration.

7. **Create opportunities for marginalized populations to define their experiences**
Destigmatize and clarify what constitutes conflict by creating opportunities for marginalized populations to name for themselves what actions, institutions, and norms cause them to experience violence. Some local practitioners working for peace across conflict-affected regions align with immigration justice advocates in calling for an expanded understanding of how war is waged against these communities. Many understand the destitution, fragility, and collapse of public services associated with conflict to be a form of direct violence waged against populations. The peacebuilding sector, especially practitioners in and from the Global North, should stand with local actors in challenging narrow understandings of conflict and violence that are defined by international stakeholders rather than directly affected people.

8. **Address the siloed nature of peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian work across the 'triple nexus'**
As local actors are increasingly pointing out, the siloed approaches across the aid nexus are not reflective of reality. Issues that development seeks to address are often inextricably connected to the conflict

that peacebuilding seeks to address, which often goes hand in hand with the type of humanitarian relief and support that populations need. While there are some practical advantages to parameters that allow for a focused approach and for actors with specific expertise to engage where their skills are best suited, these parameters should be guides, not barriers, for how to work across the triple aid nexus. Especially for the peacebuilding sector, the relationship between insecurity and conflict is increasingly emphasized by local peacebuilding practitioners around the world. This should point to an understanding that addressing violent conflict- and its consequences, including displacement- will involve holistic and comprehensive approaches to ending violence and creating conditions of just, sustainable peace.

9. **Make conflict mediation practices and tools accessible for application in the broader migration arena**
One significant roadblock that the peacebuilding sector grapples with involves challenging dominant approaches to violent conflict, which are typically militarized and focus solely on suppressing violence in the immediate term rather than working toward a long-term, sustainable peace. Unfortunately, many approaches related to migration, including border enforcement, responding to conflict in refugee camps, stifling irregular migration flows, and more, are shaped by these violent and militarized approaches. This presents another motivation to advocate for nonviolent and mediative approaches to all aspects of migration response and for why peacebuilders should work to make their best practices accessible and appealing for those beyond the sector to apply to their own work.

10. **Recognize preventing forced displacement as a critical objective of peacebuilding efforts**
Despite occasionally gaining some traction in the international legal sphere and within niche, faith-based humanitarian approaches, UN conventions related to the

"right not to be arbitrarily displaced" or the *"right to remain"* are often fringe schools of thought that are overshadowed by the more widely recognized and debated *"right to migrate".* These conventions currently exist as soft laws with little to no practical power. However, when given the opportunity to analyze displacement and forced migration through the lens of violent conflict, peacebuilders, academics, and advocates pointed out that these are two sides of the same coin. While the human right to migrate is critical within itself, considering this alongside the right not to be displaced allows for a recognition that the experience of moving within and across borders should be a choice.

When an individual's agency is constrained by violent conflict, destitution, or other factors, the right not to be displaced is violated. Shifting toward a future that protects people's right not to be displaced will encompass a broad range of structural changes, some of which are outside of the scope of peacebuilding. By recognizing forced migration as an act of violence, peacebuilders are empowered to name the prevention and mitigation of conflict-induced displacement as an explicit and crucial goal of approaches to nonviolent conflict transformation. Efforts to address, end, and prevent violent conflict should be bold in their expression and protection of individuals' right to exist safely in their communities of origin without being displaced by conflict actors. In this way, humanitarian workers in the migration sphere and peacebuilding practitioners can support each other's violence reduction work across the spectrum of migratory experiences.

11. **Promote dialogue and coordination between local practitioners in countries of origin and destination countries to develop transnational solidarity to address conflict**
Beyond strengthening links between practitioners, transnational solidarity can raise awareness and agency among displaced communities as well as raise consciousness and increase sensitivity

among host communities to activate cross-community support. Diaspora communities are a key place to look for leaders in transnational advocacy and peacebuilding. Leaders within these communities are well-positioned to play a significant role in bridging priorities and understanding between countries of origin and destination countries. In general, international peacebuilders and humanitarian workers based in destination countries could engage in the peace-migration nexus by committing to coordinating and convening with peacebuilders in the countries of origin.

12. **Recognize the value of lived experience and create space for migrants and displaced people to lead at the intersection of peace and migration**
When the voices of migrants and displaced people are amplified, one cohesive message that emerges is a push back on conventions that were largely determined by actors in the Global North, or generally in destination countries. Those with firsthand knowledge of complex migratory experiences are among the best positioned to shape understandings and approaches. However, as many rights activists point out, it is usually these very voices that are excluded from decision-making places, reinforcing imbalanced power dynamics and the marginalization of displaced people and migrants. Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT) is one group calling for people with lived experiences of displacement to be closer to the center of change on issues related to migration. R-SEAT, along with other humanitarian and advocacy groups, ended the June UN Conference on Resettlement by pointing out that among senior leadership at UNHCR, there are no refugees or people with lived experience of displacement. They called for this to be rectified and for greater representation in the next leadership. This push is one that peacebuilders can and should support in the spirit of inclusion and localization agendas.

Annex 1: List of Participants

AbdulGhani Oyaifo
President
International Society for Peace and Safety

Adane Dessecha
Deputy Head of Peacebuilding department
Interreligious Council of Ethiopia

Adar Zehavi
Academic/ Researcher

Adriana Salcedo
Director of the Department of Peace and
Conflict Studies
University for Peace (UPEACE)

Adrien Mutabesha Bahizire
Peacebuilder, Coordinator
VISION TEKOA

Aji Ceesay
Research Officer
Peace Direct

Alassane Niambele
Executive Director
Malian Institute of Research Action for Peace
(IMRAP)

Alexandra Eisinger
Intern, Academic/ Researcher
Conservation International

Amândio ALBANO Mavela
Advocate, Policy Expert- Angola

Amani Jospin
Regional Coordinator
Solidarity for Supervision and Fight Against
Poverty
Solidarité pour L'encadrement et Lutte Contra La
Pauvrete (SELP)

Andrea Rudnik
Teacher, Community Worker, Advocate

Andreanna Mond
Practitioner, Peacebuilder, Program Coordinator
SHARE Food Program

Arazw Namiq Ali
Peacebuilder, Practitioner, Advocate, Media
Worker

Ariel Zarate
Community Worker, Mental Health Care
Specialist, Advocate

Arike Joel Pundro
Volunteer Mediator, Non-violent Conflict
Resolution Advocate

Beng Primus
Founder, Practitioner
Youth Initiatives for Peacebuilding and Conflict
Resolution (Cameroon)

Bothwell Mussett Chitengu
Academic/ Researcher, Practitioner

Carla Akil
Research Assistant, Activist
Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship

Catherine Martha Agwang
Practitioner/ CEO and Founder
Uganda Youth Development and Training
Programme

Dr. Christina Bache
Research Affiliate, Academic, Practitioner
Queen's University

Clara Villatoro
Academic/ Researcher, Advocate

Deb Roberts
Advocate, Humanitarian Healthcare Worker,
Peacebuilder Practitioner

Dimitri Kotsiras
Research Manager
Peace Direct

Dr. John Bosco Ngendakurio
Scholar, Researcher, Lecturer, Former Refugee,
Policy Advisor, Advocate

Dr. Jyoti M. Pathania
Founder & Editor
Online Indian Journal of Peace & Conflict
Resolution

Elana Aquino
Executive Director
Peace Direct

Elsie Mares
Herbert Scoville Fellow
Peace Direct

Fady Traore
Researcher
Malian Institute for Research-Action for Peace
(IMRAP)

Faida Rose
Deputy Coordinator
Network of Women in Action for Social
Development

Florence Kayemba
Programme Manager
Stakeholder Democracy Network

Francisco Ortuño-Millán
Artist, Researcher, Peacebuilder
Laboratorio Arte y Paz del Instituto de Derechos
Humanos, Democracia, Cultura de Paz y no
Violencia (DEMOSPAZ) Universidad Autónoma
de Madrid.

Galeo Saintz
Co-Chair
IUCN CEESP Theme on Environment and Peace

Gazbiah Sans
Peacebuilder Practitioner, Policymaker

Gifty Volimkarime
CEO
Centre for Entrepreneurship and Evaluation
Development-CEED

Giulia McPherson
Director of Advocacy & Operations
Jesuit Refugee Service USA

Grace Atim
Chief Research Fellow
Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution Abuja

Harun Rashid
Scholar, Peacebuilder
Kent State University

Ibrahim Harouna Ousmane
Academic/ Researcher, Peacebuilder
University of Niamey

Ileana Valle
Advisory Council
Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security

Imani Cruz
Policy Advocacy Coordinator
American Friends Service Committee

Innocent Burhabale Kamungu
Teacher, Academic/ Researcher
ISTD/Kalehe

Isha Mandal
Project Lead on the Migration, Peace and
Security Agenda
Center for Migration and Gender Justice (CMGJ)

Jacques Lumenge Lubangu
Peacebuilder, Community Worker, Legal
Representative
Association of the Survivors of Makobola
Massacres (ARMMK)

Jasmin Lilian Diab
Director, Academic/ Researcher
Institute for Migration Studies, Lebanese
American University.

Jean Claude Mudende
Executive Secretary
Association for a Progressive African Youth

Jean-Pierre Buledi Mpia
DRC Coordinator
The Support Center for Education and
Community Development (CEDECO)

Jigyasa Gulati
ALLY India Fellow, Peacebuilder

Jude Barah Fonkividzem I
Advocate, Youth Organizer, Student

Julia Canney
Academic/ Researcher, Practitioner
Violence, Inequality and Power Lab at the Kroc
Institute for Peace and Justice

Justin Misafiri
Peacebuilder, Youth Activist, Community
Organization President
Youth Engaged for Development and Social
Progress (YEDSP)

Kelsey Hampton
Search for Common Ground

Kit Dorey
UK Policy & Advocacy Manager
Peace Direct

Kynnedi Henry
Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security

Linda Krzikalla
Student
University of Siena

Lisa Notter
Development Officer
Hands of Peace

Lucie Bello
Project Coordinator
Institut Malien de Recherche Action pour la Paix
(IMRAP)

Marie Meiser
Consultant, Advocate
Baha'i International Community

Marie-Josee Hamel
Regional coordinator Humanitarian
Disarmament and Peacebuilding
Danish Refugee Council

Marina Aragão Santos
Local Coordinator/ Practitioner
Pan American Development Foundation (PADF)

Martha Inés Romero
LAC Regional Coordinator
Pax Christi International-Latin America and
Caribbean Programme

Mayssa Daye
Practitioner, Consultant

Merwyn DeMello
Peacebuilder, Community Worker
Dorothy Day Catholic Workers & the Assisi
Community

Michael Hughes
Head of Building Sustainable Communities
Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Michelle Garred
Ripple Peace Research & Consulting LLC
Volunteer working with refugees and asylum
seekers in Seattle

Miriam Gonzales
Communications Coordinator
Institute for Women in Migration, Instituto para
las Mujeres en la Migración, AC

Mobina Jaffer
Policymaker, Advocate
Senate- Canada

Monica Curca
Founder and Director
Activate Labs

Mubarak Tukur
Practitioner, Academic/ Researcher
Nasarawa Foundation

Muhindo Vitale Muvisco
Programmes and Partnership Manager
Africa Restoring Bridges Initiative

Mulamba Placide Kituta
Founder and Executive Director
Fizi Education and Development Center (CEDEF)

Mustapha Abdurrahman
Katsina State Project Coordinator
Building Blocks For Peace Foundation

Mustapha Isah
Peacebuilder Practitioner, Graduate Member
Institute For Crises Resolution Peacebuilding
And Reconciliation

Naji Al Qadri
Peacebuilder, Community Worker and Volunteer

Nathan Ojo
Herbert Scoville Fellow
Search for Common Ground

Ngandeu Ngatta Hugue
Programme Specialist and Head of Social and
and Human Sciences Unit
UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa

Obert Gonzo
Peacebuilder, Executive Director
Family Visions Child Trust

Oluwadamilola Ogunjobi
Founder & CEO
THINK TANK in FOCUS

Patrice Wellesley-Cole
Transnational Peacebuilder, Retired Human
Rights Judge
Peace Rotary International
Honorary Fellow, St. Hugh's college, Oxford
University

Pavithra Jayawardena
Academic/ Researcher, Lecturer
University of Colombo

Pietro Uzochukwu Macleo
Chairman, Gray Child Foundation
Ambassador, Institute for Economics and Peace

Pratima T. Narayan
Deputy Director, Global Initiative for Justice,
Truth and Reconciliation
International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

Raaval Bains
Research Officer
Peace Direct

Rachel Locke
Pracademic (Practitioner – Academic), Director
Violence, Inequality and Power (VIP) Lab at the
Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice

Regina Chung
Junior Fellow
Global Research Network

Richard T Ndi
Transnational Peacebuilder, Consultant
Mediators Beyond Borders International

Ruby Quantson Davis
Senior Learning and Impact Advisor
Peace Direct

Saeeda Diep
Founding Director
Pakistan Centre for Peace and Secular Studies

Samer Jabbour
Academic/ Researcher
Co-Chair of the Lancet-AUB Commission on Syria

Sawssan Abou-Zahr
Journalist, Local Correspondent
Peace Insight

Seda Seusing
International Peace Consultant

Shannon Paige
Policy Associate
Peace Direct

Sharo Shaho Muatasam
Project Coordinator, Peacebuilder

Susan Nchubiri
Advocate, Community Worker, Student
University of Notre Dame

Sushobha Barve
Program Coordinator, Executive Secretary, Practitioner
Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation

Tak Tamang
Secretary, Peacebuilder
Paropakar Primary Health Care Centre PPUK

Théophile Sewimfura
Director and Alain Admin Manager
Africa Restoring Bridges Initiative

Toni Shapiro-Phim
Co-Director, Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts
Brandeis University

Tori Bateman
Policy Advocacy Coordinator
American Friends Service Committee

Tsion G. Berhane Meskel
Humanitarian Healthcare Provider, Academic

Ursul Amos
Country coordinator
International Organization of United Nations Volunteers (IOUNV)
Founder and Practitioner
Jeunesse Voie de la Paix

Vahe Mirikan
Assistant Director of Policy
Peace Direct

Vani Bhardwaj
Academic, Writer, Community Worker

Vincent Raymond Lyn
Founder & CEO
We Can Save Children

Yameli Gomez Jimenez
Integration Coordinator
Internationale Frauen E.V.

Yinka Azeez Adenuga
Academic/ Researcher

Zoya Miari
Advocate, Refugee, Humanitarian Worker and Volunteer Toastmasters

peace
direct

/peacedirect   @peacedirect   /peacedirect   /peace-direct