FORCED MIGRATION review

Climate crisis and local communities

plus
Early reflections on COVID-19

Trafficking and smuggling

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

REFUGEE STUDIES CENTRE

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From the editors

This issue will go online and to print while the UK is still gradually easing its lockdown. We know that many of our readers will be living and working in very difficult circumstances, and we extend to you our warmest wishes.

Unusually, this issue of FMR includes two main feature themes, one on Climate crisis and local communities and one on Trafficking and smuggling, plus a 'mini-feature' on early reflections on COVID-19 in the context of displacement.

Climate crisis and local communities: Local communities around the world have been coping with the effects of a changing climate for decades. This feature focuses on the impact on local communities, their coping strategies, lessons arising, and broader questions of access, rights and justice. (A future issue will focus on international response and policy.)

Trafficking and smuggling: Since we published an issue on human trafficking in 2006, increased reporting of both trafficking and smuggling has triggered renewed attention around the growing impact of, and the links between, these related but distinct phenomena. This feature explores some of the current challenges, misconceptions, insights and innovations in these fields.

COVID-19 – early reflections: Four articles offer preliminary reflections on the pandemic, focusing on the role of refugee-led organisations and the need for data to inform responses.

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With best wishes

Marion Couldrey and Jenny Peebles
Editors, Forced Migration Review

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Resilience, adaptation and learning: Malian refugees and their Mauritanian hosts

Fouda Ndikintum and Mohamed Ag Malha

Malian refugees in Mbera, Mauritania, have brought with them the skills and experience they gained in managing the effects of climate change in their home country, and are learning new skills in exile. Both refugee and host communities are benefiting.

Mauritania currently hosts 60,511 refugees who fled Mali in 2012. These refugees hail from the north of Mali and are now living in Mbera camp and its surroundings, in south-eastern Mauritania.[1] They left their home areas because of growing insecurity; prior to their flight, however, most of them had experienced the negative consequences of climate change over several decades or longer. Droughts, for example, have recurred every 10 years or so in northern Mali since 1973.

Being mostly herders, Malian refugees often bring their livestock with them into exile. Demand for natural resources in their host communities – such as water and pasture for livestock – has placed increased pressure on these resources, exacerbated by climate change. The natural environment has also been affected by other activities such as firewood collection and use of water for domestic and agricultural purposes. Fortunately, refugees bring solutions as well as their own needs with them. Having themselves dealt with the negative consequences of climate change in their home country, they are better equipped to deal with such challenges and to mitigate some of these in the host community. The refugees acknowledge that their openness to learning in their new situation was developed during their own search for solutions to the severe consequences of climate change which they experienced at home.

Deciding to move: tipping points

Several Malian refugees now living in the Mbera camp had been forced to move previously from their homes because of climate change, though they remained in their country. Their immediate response to the negative impacts of climate change was then,

and remains, to attempt to build resilience by way of indigenous innovations, such as the use of various types of mulches to conserve soil water and the use of animal skin to wrap around jars in order to keep water cool. The sense of community also plays a central role as a means of survival, with the most resilient members of the community extending a generous hand to the less resilient.

When a community's innovative adaptation strategies are stretched beyond their limits, however, people start to consider moving further away from home. The tipping point is reached when, in addition to failed adaptation strategies, relationships become strained, as safeguarding personal and immediate family interests becomes the priority over generosity to others.

The decision to move is usually reached after consultation, following which there could be a large exodus of the greater part of community members. Decisions can also be reached individually, for example by youth who have reached the age of maturity and consider it an obligation to fend for themselves. At the other extreme, some people would rather die on their land than move elsewhere. Others would consider seeking refuge in a neighbouring country only if the predominant religion practised there were the same as their own.

Facilitating integration

The existence of a democratic culture, national affinities, shared ethnicity and family ties across the border are all factors affecting the predisposition of host communities to embrace persons forced to move. The Government of Mauritania has maintained an open-door policy towards Malian refugees for decades, and has asked the

Malian refugee herders gather at Mbera camp to sell livestock.

local population to receive the refugees and to consider them as brothers and sisters.

Rearing of cattle and, to a lesser extent, small ruminants is the most important activity undertaken by the majority of Malian refugees. Moreover, the stock of cattle owned is an indication of wealth (savings that can be transformed into cash) and of status. Strategies used by Malian refugees to ensure they can integrate easily in the host country include recovery, rebuilding or adapting their livelihoods options.

With regard to recovery, displaced persons who left home in haste have two options. They can rely on a trustworthy herdsman to drive their cattle to a safe, accessible haven, probably with the help of reliable friends or traditional or administrative authorities who would provide safe passage. Alternatively, they can take the risk of returning personally to retrieve their animals. When possible, the rebuilding of livelihoods is achieved by cleverly selecting animals which yield the most milk, have the greatest number of calves or produce the most meat to be used as seed capital to commence rebuilding of stock in the country of asylum. If such rebuilding is not a feasible option, the refugees will instead adapt, embracing whatever livelihoods options are available in the country of asylum,

sometimes through partners funded by donors, and use this as a springboard to re-engage with small ruminant and subsequently cattle production. These strategies may indeed be carried out simultaneously.

Adaptation strategies

Malian refugees in Mbera have successsfully replicated several innovations developed in Mali in response to climate change. These include gardening (to grow produce for household consumption) and working through associations to resolve pressure on natural resources and to reduce environmental degradation.

Only 1.3% of refugee households living in Mbera had an agricultural background at the time of arrival at the camp; however, as of 31 December 2019, statistics available to UNHCR indicate that approximately 10% of households in the entire refugee community were engaged in **gardening** either independently or with the assistance of UNHCR's partners in the camp.

Refugees have replicated several techniques they had used to circumvent the negative effects of climate change when they were in Mali. Firstly, the refugees brought with them heat-resistant varieties of seeds not known to the host community,

including purple onion and tomato seeds. Secondly, they engaged in environment-friendly practices, such as the production of compost for enhancing soil fertility, whereas the norm in the host community was to use unfermented animal dung, which has the negative consequence of increasing attacks by soldier ants. Thirdly, indigenous water conservation techniques, such as the use of circular sunken seed beds as opposed to the Mauritanians' usual flat beds or sunken rectangular seed beds, started being used.

The combined use of these techniques resulted in impressive yields during the 2019 farming season, and these positive results obtained by the refugees have aroused enthusiasm in the host community for the activity. An exchange visit was recently jointly organised by partners and UNHCR at the Mbera camp, which afforded Malian refugee women engaged in gardening an opportunity to share their experiences in water management, soil fertility enhancement and natural pest control techniques with women from the host community.

Mauritania has passed a number of laws in order to protect its natural resources from being over-exploited, with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development responsible for enforcement. When there is no effective presence of the Ministry in an area of the country, such as is the case in the district of Bassikounou where Mbera is located, Natural Resources Management Associations (NRMA) are created to regulate access to and rehabilitation of natural resources. In Mbera camp, however, where NRMA do not exist, refugees have been inspired by their own experiences back home and have created several **associations** in order to combat environmental degradation. For example, a group, called Volontaires Réfugiés pour la Propriété du Camp (Refugee Volunteers for Camp Cleanliness), regularly organises clean-up campaigns within the camp which they occasionally extend to the host community.

Afforestation associations have meanwhile planted more than 60,000 locally adapted tree species distributed by SOS Desert, within the last five years. These campaigns are usually organised during World Environment Day

Celebrations (5 June) and National Day of the Tree celebrations during the first week of August. These actions, which have been spearheaded by refugees, have helped to dispel the idea that refugees are the greatest degraders of the environment. They are now rather seen as partners for change.

Refugees have equally learned from the host community and adopted local environment-friendly practices. Bushfires account for some of the worst environmental degradation in Mauritania. Following awareness-raising campaigns and directives on how to raise the alarm in case of a bushfire, the number of bushfire outbreaks and disasters caused were reduced to four in 2019. Malian refugees – who knew very little about fire-tracing – now have a fire-fighting brigade and jointly intervene with host community brigades and gendarmes to fight wild fires. They were also equally involved in preventive measures such as the establishment of over 100km of firebreaks.

The openness of refugees to **learning** has further resulted in their adopting small ruminant fattening techniques which enable animals to put on more weight for the same quantity of pasture consumed, leading to the reduction of the pressure on pastures in the long term. In addition, for example, the use of para-veterinarians – which was non-existent in the refugee community but is practised in the host community – has been embraced by the Malian refugees.

Local-to-local knowledge exchange takes place through both formal and informal channels. Informal channels include interactions among community members when they meet at water points, at pastures and at weekly markets or festive ceremonies. Formal platforms of interaction are often created by UN agencies and other partners intervening at hosting sites on occasions held to mark international days of observance and activism, such as World Refugee Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Moreover, a partner agency has facilitated the creation of mixed refugee–host community committees in the villages within the district of Bassikounou. These committees are empowered in the

management of conflicts including those related to access to natural resources.

Rethinking assumptions

There needs to be a rethink about the commonly held perception that an influx of refugees or persons relocating to other places because of climate change crisis or conflict or both is always negative. Refugees bring a wealth of resources with them, including human resources developed through facing climate-related crises in their home countries. These experiences often enable them to tackle similar challenges in the country of asylum and to inspire host country citizens to do the same. Harnessing the potential and resourcefulness of both refugees and host community members can

over time shape the way countries respond to climate change crisis, contribute to the promotion of food security and natural resource protection practices, and at the same time offer protection to refugees.

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This article is written in a personal capacity and does not necessarily represent the views of any organisations mentioned.

1. 61.3% Tuareg; 37.2% Arab; 1.5% other minority tribes

Environmental challenges and local strategies in Western Sahara

Matthew Porges

Sahrawi refugee-nomads are finding ways to tackle the interconnected climate-related challenges that they face. Their responses show the importance of flexible, refugee-driven initiatives.

Much of the attention paid to the Western Sahara conflict, particularly from the perspective of refugee and forced migration studies, has understandably focused on the Sahrawi refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria. These camps were set up in 1975 following the outbreak of war between Morocco and the Polisario Front (Western Sahara's pro-independence movement) and have an estimated population of around 173,000 Sahrawis, the indigenous people of Western Sahara. Polisario administers the camps, as well as about 20% of the territory of Western Sahara – an area it calls the Liberated Territories. This area may have a population of around 30,000–40,000 (although population figures here are even harder to measure), primarily comprising nomadic herders. Population estimates in both the camps and the Liberated Territories are politicised by both Morocco and Polisario,

and are also complicated by ongoing movement of families and individuals between Polisario's territory and northern Mauritania, as well as by temporary labour migration from the camps to Spain and Algeria. Population figures, particularly for the camps, are therefore best understood as snapshots of a continuously circulating set of inhabitants.[1]

The harshness of the desert climate combined with the population's historic reliance on nomadic pastoralism (of camels, goats and sheep) have left the population extremely vulnerable to climatic variations. Catastrophic droughts during the colonial period triggered rapid (though temporary) urbanisation, with much of the dispersed nomadic population coalescing around Spanish-controlled cities. The war with Morocco, which lasted until 1991, similarly resulted in significant damage to the

nomadic economy. Since the war, most of the population has resided in the Tindouf camps. Following the conclusion of the war with Morocco, Polisario – which itself maintains substantial camel herds – made a concerted effort to develop the Liberated Territories specifically for nomadic pastoralism by implementing large-scale landmine clearance, installing and maintaining wells, and rejuvenating the nomadic economy.

Climatic challenges – and appropriate responses

Camp life has presented unique challenges for the previously nomadic population, and many of those challenges have been exacerbated in recent decades by a changing climate. Attempts by NGOs to encourage sedentary agriculture – Oxfam, for instance, has invested in the cultivation of the multi-use plant *Moringa oleifera*[2] – have met with mixed success, in part because the camp population is more familiar with animal pastoralism. Another increasingly severe problem has been the increased frequency of flooding in the camps. Rather than experiencing a steady, continuous decline in rainfall, the Algerian desert around Tindouf has seen long droughts interspersed with brief but very intense rainfall. Most semi-permanent structures in the camps were initially built by the refugees from mud-bricks made using locally sourced materials. In some cases, the refugees resisted building with more permanent materials for ideological reasons, preferring to remain perpetually ready to return to Western Sahara and a future independent State. Flooding, previously very rare in the region, has become an almost annual occurrence. In 2015, for instance, many of the mud-brick houses dissolved in the heavy rains, leaving hundreds of refugees homeless. Building with water-resistant materials, like cement, partially mitigates the problem, though the production of mud-bricks in the camps provides employment for many refugees.

Another problem exacerbated by climate change is the depletion of groundwater. The Tindouf camps were deliberately built near a large aquifer, and nomadic movement throughout the Liberated Territories is

contingent on the replenishment of either naturally occurring surface water or small man-made wells. Irregular, unpredictable rainfall patterns and prolonged drought, however, make it difficult to depend on ephemeral water sources, and also increase pressure on the Tindouf aquifer. This problem can be partially mitigated by the use of mechanical wells. The development of artificial water resources in the Liberated Territories, moreover, has also allowed for the development of community gardens, with Polisario-run gardening projects emerging in a number of locations.

The unpredictable rainfall, generalised drought and depletion of groundwater are problems for both nomads and refugees, but the population of the Western Sahara camps is unusual in that it retains a tie to both refugee and nomadic worlds. The anthropologist Cindy Horst, writing about Somali refugee-nomads in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp, defined Somalis' nomadic heritage "as consisting of three elements: a mentality of looking for greener pastures; a strong social network that entails the obligation to assist each other in surviving; and risk-reduction through strategically dispersing investments in family members and activities."[3] In a sedentary community, this nomadic mentality persists in the form of opportunism, flexibility, social solidarity and resisting single points of economic failure – which are largely the values that Sahrawi refugees ascribe to their own nomadic heritage. Any climate resilience strategy implemented in the Tindouf camps, then, will have to bridge the refugee and nomad categories.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the most promising strategy comes from the population itself. In 2016, a Sahrawi refugee named Taleb Brahim, who had previously trained as an engineer in Syria, began experimenting with hydroponic agriculture. Hydroponics is the practice of growing plants without soil, typically by immersing the roots in nutrient-enhanced water. Hydroponic agriculture is vastly more water-efficient than most other methods, and is therefore a promising strategy for intensive agriculture in arid climates. Brahim's earliest hydroponic

crop was barley, a very simple crop to grow. Using his first home-built hydroponic system, Brahim was able to feed his own goats, reducing his need to move in search of pasture while also increasing the quality and quantity of the milk and meat produced (goats in the camps often eat plastic refuse, contaminating their products).

Expensive, complicated, high-tech units are not a scalable solution by themselves. In 2017, Brahim demonstrated the success of his initial system to the Innovation Accelerator initiative of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Munich. Brahim's system was selected for Innovation Accelerator funding and a WFP programme called H2Grow was subsequently established, under which Brahim – working with WFP and Oxfam staff – developed a range of hydroponic units derived from his first model, reducing the unit cost while retaining productivity. These new units were cheaper, relied on locally available materials, and were easier to use and repair. Crucially, they could also be adapted to specific local requirements. With assistance from WFP, Oxfam and Polisario, Brahim began running hydroponic workshops in the camps, eventually training over a thousand Sahrawi refugees in the use of the low-tech systems. Under the H2Grow programme, Brahim's hydroponic systems were tested in refugee camps in Chad, Jordan, Sudan and Kenya; in each case, the units could be modified and optimised for local requirements. This, Brahim argued in a speech in 2019, "allows people to become part of their own solution", implementing a refugee-driven, refugee-focused aid programme.[4]

Lessons for climate resilience

There are several lessons here for analogous contexts of displacement. Most obviously, the specific technologies and practices of hydroponic agriculture and climate-resistant construction can be exported, and in some cases have already been tested elsewhere with

© Taleb Brahim

Taleb Brahim tends plants grown using a hydroponic system.

positive results. In cases where refugees have a history of nomadic movement, that heritage presents specific opportunities (involvement in regional economies, pastoralist autonomy) and challenges (discomfort with sedentary life, reliance on modes of production that may not be possible in a camp context) that must be taken into account by host communities and aid providers. More generally, the lesson of climate resilience in Tindouf is that refugee communities are not essentially alike; they retain the practices, skills and cultural contexts of their pre-displacement worlds, and climate resilience policies must be implemented in that context. Finally, it is likely that in many cases refugees are best positioned to devise these strategies themselves, approaching problems from their

own perspective and side-stepping the pitfalls of unilaterally applied external solutions.

It is also significant, from the perspective of aid provision, how one chooses to define the parameters of the problem. A limited approach to environmental challenges in Tindouf might focus on irregular rainfall patterns, or the accumulation of plastic in the diets (and products) of camp-raised livestock. Broadening the perspective, however, to the involvement of the refugees in, for instance, the nomadic economy of the Liberated Territories means that drought and loss of pastureland must be included in the analysis. A comprehensive environmental strategy will have to incorporate the full range of these entanglements. No single environmental policy can tackle such disparate challenges, but individual refugee-centred strategies have already had promising success in Tindouf and the Liberated Territories.

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Climate-induced involuntary migration: nomadic-pastoralists' search for elusive pastures in Kenya

Ekai Nabenyo

As the impacts of climate change grow more severe, Turkana nomadic-pastoralists are increasingly being forced to move, rather than choosing to move. Their voices must be heard at the local and international level, and their knowledge and insights must inform policymaking.

I hail from Turkana, a nomadic-pastoralist community that numbers approximately one million and occupies the most arid parts of northwestern Kenya. Our region, Turkana County, stretches to the Ethiopian, South Sudanese and Ugandan borders. We keep cattle, donkeys, camels, goats and sheep, and engage in transhumance, moving livestock from place to place in search of water and greener pastures.

Turkana County is also known for its fragile state of security, with repeated internal and cross-border attacks and counter-attacks from other pastoralist communities in the region. While the world now considers climate change as a new driver of internal displacement, pastoralist communities have long had their own ways of tackling the impacts of climate changes – by moving into neighbouring countries where they may either collaborate or clash with their new neighbours.

Largely due to a feeling of being neglected by government, there is a general reluctance by the Turkana and indeed all other pastoralists to follow immigration policies. On its side, the government evidently does not consider the challenges faced by the Turkana as a priority, yet the conditions of this region demand innovative approaches. Governments need to wake up to reality, and to be alert to weather patterns and the likelihood of pastoralists having to move with their livestock. The Turkana experience has highlighted how reactive the government is, rather than proactive, even when information about a planned 'distress migration' of the pastoralists is available beforehand.

Learning from the Turkana way of life

It is a common misconception that the pastoralist communities of the world are constantly on the move. The Turkana debunk this narrative. While they do move from place to place, when Turkana pastoralists have access to water and green pasture they do not keep moving on. The decision to move is therefore not a voluntary one. Additionally, the decision is usually made on an individual basis, especially for movement within their own country. The decision to cross international borders, however, is often made as a group because, as they often move into volatile security situations, there is greater security in numbers when they move together. The community's council of elders plays a critical role in assessment and decision making. The elders may send out emissaries to neighbouring communities or countries to inspect the pastures and report back.

In the Turkana context, numerous factors influence the community's decision about whether to move or not. Before any decision is taken to move on, the depletion of local pastures is first countered by controlled grazing, communal sharing and rotational grazing. These restrictions are established by consensus and the elders take the lead in implementing the rules. The Turkana attach a lot of importance to land and consider it a blessing from *Akuj* (God), with the current generation holding it in trust for future generations. Other pastoralist communities that permit an open policy where individuals permit their animals to graze as they wish are often adversely affected. As different animals have different grazing patterns, an uncontrolled system will create a tragedy of the commons that will have devastating effects for all. The Turkana people have learned such survival tactics – which are worth emulating.

Turkana is a region that is grappling with the harsh realities of climate change, and there is an urgent need to enable local pastoralist voices to be heard in climate discussions, something that has hitherto been lacking. Recognition of pastoralists' opinions on climate change and of their knowledge pertaining to climate adaptation has generally not been accorded international

Project Survival Media/Joe Lukhovi

attention, especially when such tribal minorities and indigenous communities as the Turkana are detached from the societal fabric of the rest of the country. Indeed, community strategies are not reflected in climate modelling – a significant failing in our approach to climate adaptation.

Bilateral negotiations by the countries involved to allow reciprocal grazing by pastoralists as well as concerted efforts to encourage joint grazing appear to be the best solution in order to call a halt to the incessant conflicts over pasture. In 2019, Uganda and Kenya signed an agreement to allow grazing rights for the Turkana pastoralists in Uganda and for the shared use of Kobebe dam (owned by Uganda). This has been effective, and such initiatives – if adopted by communities facing similar challenges elsewhere – may have the potential of allowing climate-hit communities to escape the climate wrath in their indigenous lands by seeking refuge in foreign lands, undisturbed.

Despite historically being purely nomadic, the Turkana have been forced by climate change to increasingly embrace agro-pastoralism. This is evident especially along the region's Turkwel and Kerio rivers which, due to aridity, now only flow during the rainy seasons. Here the government and NGOs have helped the Turkana to adopt agro-pastoralism. Additionally, a number of the Turkana community engage in fishing in Lake Turkana. Such grassroots adaptation efforts need to be adopted and supported as mitigation measures to enable pastoralist communities to diversify their livelihoods, recover and rebuild. However, this is only possible for those who live around the lakes and rivers and have access to land on the banks.

Culture and faith play a big role in the life of the Turkana. Making sacrifices to ancestors is a common practice, traditionally geared towards preventing and reducing the negative impacts of climate change. While science indicates that climate change is a result of disastrous human activities, the Turkana believe that the aridity that pushes them into moving is a result of the *Akuj* being unhappy. Two worlds apart! The climate debate needs to take into consideration such beliefs, debunking them if need be in order for science and tradition to read from the same script.

The involuntary nature of migration

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees does not address the emerging issue of people displaced because of the impact of climate change. Some scholars argue that the correct terminology to be adopted ought to be 'climate migrants' – as the term 'climate refugee' has no legal standing – but this ignores the involuntariness which characterises most, if not all, climate-induced migration, especially in a pastoralism context. There is a need to place climate change at the heart of the refugee discourse by recognising it as a ground for flight. Additionally, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration should endeavour to monitor climatic conditions and weather patterns in pastoralist-occupied areas in order to be sufficiently prepared to assist pastoralists forced to move.

Meanwhile, there is a need to provide opportunities to people such as the Turkana to migrate with dignity, especially in cases of distress migration. For this community of people, who have increasingly embraced agriculture, there are a number of climate adaptation initiatives that may strengthen resilience, including training and assistance with growing more drought-resistant crops. It is imperative to increase pastoralists' access to alternative sources of livelihoods outside traditional nomadism. However, it should also be noted that the most appropriate interventions largely depend on the specific context of a local community. Governments and the international community must do more to support pastoralists' own adaptation efforts and to promote legal migration pathways. If the voices of the people at the grassroots are anything to go by, this is what those most affected most want.

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Community strategies for diversification in Ethiopia

Pablo Cortés Ferrández

The 2015–17 drought in the Horn of Africa displaced more than 300,000 pastoralists in the eastern part of the Somali region of Ethiopia. Many who lost their livestock have instead engaged in grassroots action to improve livelihoods recovery and to build resilience.

For the pastoral communities in the Dollo zone of Ethiopia's Somali region, the 2015–17 drought was the worst in living memory. "We have never experienced a drought of this kind. … Around nine years ago, we suffered one, but it was not as severe as this one because we kept a considerable number of animals alive. In the [2015–17] drought, two consecutive rainy seasons failed … and we lost all our animals," explained a 40-year-old pastoralist who, since 2017, has been living with her husband and seven children in a temporary shelter at the Koracle site for internally displaced people (IDPs).[1]

Pastoralism is the main livelihood of communities in the drylands of southern Ethiopia, and families are very vulnerable to displacement associated with climate change. As at the end of July 2019, 425,000 people were living in displacement associated with drought.[2] Nearly 94% of households in Gafow and Koracle IDP sites defined their lifestyle before displacement as nomadic pastoralism but during the latest drought households lost up to 80% of their livestock. As a result of the repeated shocks, local authorities in Dollo zone estimate that the proportion of pastoralists in the area has decreased from around 80% to 20%.

Alongside movement of people has also come huge and early movement of livestock, as pastoralists move their animals from areas with low rainfall to areas of higher rainfall. Districts with higher rainfall levels are experiencing high grazing pressure, leading to fears of pasture and water depletion. Many pastoralists face challenges because of the high vulnerability of prevailing livelihoods, low productivity, and limited market links, diversification opportunities and social and economic services. Loss of livestock is forcing people to adapt.

Both camps in the case-study, Gafow and Koracle, were opened in January 2017, and IDPs displaced by drought are now living in protracted displacement, with scarce opportunities for self-reliance and local integration. "It is a feeling of hopelessness. You have no means of livelihood. You don't have any other support and you are the responsible person in your family. We came with nothing," explained a male pastoralist in Gafow. Food insecurity and lack of access to drinking water and health care are the main challenges. Displaced pastoralists live in temporary settlements in relatively underdeveloped and marginalised settings where their peri-urban host communities also experience precarious socio-economic situations – including chronic malnutrition, limited access to basic social services and economic infrastructure, poor livelihood opportunities and a diminishing natural resource base. Consecutive years of drought and profound food insecurity have severely depleted communities' coping mechanisms and resilience at a time when they are most needed.

Livelihoods recovery and resilience building

In the Somali region, where communities affected by displacement are highly dependent on aid, resilience building is one of the main priorities of local actors, where committees of IDPs and host community grassroots organisations are keen to develop diversified and sustainable livelihoods. During interviews, IDPs and host community representatives proposed the creation of a diversification framework to support a livelihoods resilience approach. This framework would be designed to identify gaps related to skills and economic activities, and then to support households to find individual and community-focused solutions which are appropriate to the local context. The focus would be on providing training in vocational skills and capacity building, plus start-up capital, for IDPs displaced by drought and especially for

groups such as women and youth. "If we could get some initial capital, we could work in the market, build some *berkas* [wells] to sell water or build a small tea shop," said a female pastoralist in Koracle. Displaced communities also suggested that small cooperative groups and savings associations should be set up to support the development of income-generation activities.

IDPs in Gafow and Koracle said that, because of the severity of the last drought, they had developed new coping strategies: "We can do two things if another drought comes. First, we can sell the animals and make money before we run out of pasture and water and, after the drought, buy animals again. Second, in small towns like Warder, there are more services and infrastructure. We can come here to the animal feeding centres during the drought," reflected a male pastoralist.

An important debate about the option of restocking and how it fits into a livelihoods resilience strategy is currently taking place in Ethiopia. Most IDPs prefer to be locally integrated but opinion is divided as to whether having animals again would be beneficial if it meant returning them to a pastoral and semi-nomadic way of life. Some people felt the best option was that some members of the family, particularly women and children, should stay close to the peri-urban areas such as Warder to learn new skills and to have better access to water and to services such as education and health care – while the men would return to rural areas to raise livestock. "If we have livestock again, we are not taking our children out of school," said a male pastoralist in Koracle.

Community-based strategies

The community-based disaster risk management strategy, developed in zones such as Dollo by the government's Disaster Risk Management Bureau together with the support of international NGOs, has proved successful. The whole community, including women, youth and elders, participate in disaster risk reduction committees. They are given an initial cash grant to discuss the current situation and produce weather

forecasts for the next season based on their experience of previous droughts and as traditional pastoral communities.

The current disaster risk reduction committees comprise the host community, IDPs and local authorities as key partners in decision-making processes. The objective of this structure is to involve the population in planning processes and to generate agency and ownership in building durable solutions. Throughout this process, any grassroots responses need to include a sensitive approach to gender, age, disability and marginalisation, and should (i) integrate gender perspectives into programming, ensuring that interventions have a positive impact on enabling – in particular – women's rights, voice and participation, and (ii) include an analysis of social exclusion (the elderly and people with disabilities) and how this arises in particular communities, to ensure that programming benefits every member of the community.

Additional committees were created in 2017 in each IDP camp; these comprised both male and female local elders, who represented IDPs in conversations with the government and NGOs. However, in the absence of government support, many of these committees are no longer functioning.

Identifying durable solutions that emerge from and are appropriate to the communities themselves is one of the challenges facing the development of and support for durable solutions in the region and in the country. A stronger commitment to local counterparts, starting with committees of IDPs and host community grassroots organisations, would enable greater acceptance, ownership and sustainability.

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Trapped or resettled: coastal communities in the Sundarbans Delta, India

Shaberi Das and Sugata Hazra

When local communities face the brunt of the impacts of climate change, how able are they to make choices in their response? And whose responsibility is it to provide support?

Forced migration due to environmental stressors must be differentiated from voluntary migration. Blurred and contradictory definitions abound, leading to inadequate or an absence of regulations regarding the provision of support and compensation. Culpability – and responsibility – can be established relatively easily in instances of development-induced displacement. In cases of forced migration triggered by climatic factors, however, no single party or parties (whether the displaced individual, the government or an international agency) can be held unquestionably accountable and therefore responsible for alleviating related hardship. The human costs are borne by local communities in locations rendered inhospitable by the interplay of different forces – climate change and sea level rise being key among them. Glimpses from communities in the islands of Ghoramara and Sagar in the Indian Sundarbans Delta convey the stark realities of forced migration for these communities.

Ghoramara: a highly vulnerable island

With lush green fields, abundant freshwater, nutrient-rich soil and a breathtaking view of the river Hooghly, Ghoramara Island is picturesque – but is rapidly being submerged. Located in the south-western edge of the Hooghly estuary, Ghoramara has experienced high rates of coastal erosion since the 1970s, and from the 1970s to the 1990s there was sustained government action to resettle displaced households to nearby Sagar Island. With 34% of the population in the Indian Sundarbans living below the poverty line[1] and 47% unable to afford two proper meals a day throughout the year,[2] the population in vulnerable islands like Ghoramara has

limited capacity to adapt to and cope with adverse environmental changes. Electricity on the island is powered by solar panels which the government and NGOs have installed in almost every household, and drinking water is obtained from tubewells. Infrastructure investment remains low, however, because of the high rate of coastal erosion; within the last 40 years, the island has been reduced to less than half of its original size, displacing thousands.[3] The first storm shelter is currently under construction, while the school building serves as a makeshift refuge.

Respondents to semi-structured interviews revealed that health care and education remain inadequate, with children often travelling to or boarding on the mainland in order to attend high school. Loss of livelihoods or inadequate returns from more traditional rural livelihoods forces at least one male member of most households to migrate seasonally to the far-away states of Kerala or Tamil Nadu for construction work. Over the last two decades, seasonal migration has become a coping mechanism for a large proportion of the population in the Sundarbans. Recently, the households of these seasonal migrants have been taking the decision to migrate permanently to safer places where wage labour is in demand, thereby turning a temporary coping mechanism into a means of long-term adaptation to environmental degradation and climate change. However, the absence of support and compensation for the land that has been lost to erosion (or soon will be) not only makes such adaptation measures extremely challenging in terms of people's finances and mental health but also raises concerns about the State's refusal to acknowledge this migration as forced rather than voluntary.

Displaced families who have the means to purchase land further inland tend to choose to rebuild their houses in comparatively safer locations rather than to migrate permanently elsewhere, either because they lack the means required for more distant, permanent migration or because they are unable to bear the notion of being separated from their land. Although they know that the present rate of erosion means that Ghoramara will be completely submerged within the next 30 to 40 years and that they will inevitably be displaced again, their deep attachment to place keeps them rooted on the island. Those who lack the means to move are increasingly demanding government assistance to enable their migration to and resettlement in a safer zone.

Until the 1990s, the Government of West Bengal gave out land tenures and financial aid to displaced households, acknowledging the challenges faced by households forced to move because of environmental factors, and thereby setting a precedent. This is particularly significant in a country where policy and regulations – such as the National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation – recognise development-induced displacement but no other type of displacement as a legitimate cause for financial aid and rehabilitation support. Legislation and policies targeted at disaster risk management overlook displacement resulting from slow-onset events and are limited to immediate post-disaster relief.

In the 1990s, as assisted resettlement of people from Ghoramara continued, the Government of West Bengal began to run out of land to give to those seeking resettlement in Sagar.[4] Smaller landholdings were awarded, until the scheme ceased altogether. Those who cannot afford to move are trapped; they continue to live in misery and despair, receiving no additional support from the government apart from what is available from existing national- and state-level rural poverty alleviation programmes.

The inordinate burden on women

Women in Ghoramara from households where some male members are seasonal migrants bear disproportionate burdens. They shoulder responsibility for heading the household, caring for children and the elderly, disabled and sick members of the family, growing crops for household consumption, and tending to domestic chores and the family's betel vine sheds. Their socio-economic position within a rural society also severely limits their mobility and their access to finance, health care, and participation in decision making; while awaiting the return of their husbands every four or six months, they live in constant fear of climate hazards and face intense deprivation. Women respondents empasised the need for a gender-sensitive analysis of the impacts of seasonal migration and forced displacement. As one of them noted:

"It gets very hard for me sometimes to manage everything here without my husband. Extreme poverty forces us to take on additional work like weaving nets."

The role of the community and local women's informal support networks features prominently in the narratives of all women respondents in Ghoramara. However, responses also reveal the reluctance of families from other islands and the mainland to marry their daughters into families in Ghoramara. Even impoverished families in Ghoramara who have sons must offer a high bride price for the son's marriage.

Sagar: a 'safe' island?

Although not connected to the mainland, Sagar – the largest island in the Sundarbans – has better infrastructure than all others in the region. The island has a lower rate of erosion than nearby Ghoramara, and benefits from the proximity of the Haldia Dock Complex (a major port on the opposite bank of the Hooghly) and from the presence of the Kapil Muni Temple on Sagar. Every January, the Gangasagar fair at the temple site attracts millions, and in recent years this alternative source of income has brought asphalt roads, electricity and 17 storm shelters to the island.

Despite the obvious benefits expected from migration to Sagar, the decision to migrate is by no means an easy one, especially due to the unavailability of assistance for

resettlement. Accounts from the Ghoramara respondents show that consultations with and support from displaced members of the community who have resettled in Sagar greatly influence the decision of other households to relocate. It is in hope of improved access to rights, resources and protection that families take a leap of faith and leave for a new life in Sagar. Thus, interaction between communities in different localities promotes the sharing of knowledge and experiences of forced relocation.

Interviews with migrants in the villages of Gangasagar and Bankim Nagar indicate a higher sense of well-being among the resettled households than among the displaced or soon-to-be displaced households in Ghoramara. However, seasonal migration continues even after resettlement, not only to supplement the family income but also because it has become a systemic practice within many islands of the Indian Sundarbans due to higher returns than from agriculture or fishing (despite loans available to farmers). While the wives of seasonal migrants continue to be overburdened, their condition is by no means as miserable as that of those still living in Ghoramara.

Improvement of life and livelihoods does not, however, prevent memories of lost homes from resurfacing. While every visit home to Ghoramara brings news of friends and relatives suffering land loss and displacement, respondents report frequently experiencing a yearning for the past. When asked whom they hold responsible for their loss, respondents variously lay the blame on the river Hooghly, sea level rise, unsustainable development, water displaced by ships, natural geomorphological processes and even the wrath of God. While this reveals a human tendency to understand phenomena in terms of culpability and cause and effect, it also shows islanders' attempts to reconcile themselves to the trauma of displacement and climate-related distress by reminding themselves that they only abandoned their home when there was no other choice. However, respondents are also well aware that they might again suffer displacement and destitution due to erosion in Sagar.

Looking ahead

Cases of forced migration such as these in the Sundarbans throw up questions about culpability and responsibility. It is worth our while, as thinkers and practitioners, to search for answers to some of the questions raised. Who pays the price for unsustainable collective human development which manifests itself in the form of environmental shocks and climate change phenomena: the affected individuals, the community or the State? Whose responsibility is it then to compensate for losses resulting from such disasters and to protect affected communities? Insights from academic institutions, State agencies, civil society and local practitioners within affected communities must be pooled to gain a broader understanding of the highly complex processes involved. This will not only promote interaction and sharing of expertise but also better planning and implementation of grassroots action by communities on the frontline of climate change.

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Climate crisis and local communities in South East Asia: causes, responses and questions of justice

Laura Geiger

Civil society networks with experience, knowledge and passion are fighting climate injustice and promoting the rights of those displaced by the impacts of climate change.

Imagine walking four hours every day to fetch fresh water because the rising sea level has made your nearby groundwater salty. Imagine being carried, while in labour, in a basket to a hospital several kilometres away because more frequent flash flooding has washed away the roads. Or imagine your children having to leave home – because traditional farming is no longer possible due to drought and land erosion – to work 12 hours a day, seven days a week, as a rickshaw driver or in a garment factory in order to earn enough to help your family survive. People are not leaving their homes because they seek a similar lifestyle to that enjoyed by many societies in the Global North; often they are forced to leave their loved ones and their homes simply for survival.

Over the past century, wealthy nations have benefited significantly from the generation of greenhouse gases and the exploitation of ecosystems, while others around the world – usually the poor and vulnerable – suffer the consequences. In the Global South, although colonial landownership has ceased, land grabbing and exploitation of natural resources continue where labour and land are kept cheap as an incentive to foreign investors and environmental and where social protection is barely enforced; in this sense, governments in the Global South also bear responsibility. Monopolistic industries dominate the markets and set the rules while community-owned enterprises or small-scale producers struggle against unfair competition. Those who have to bear the burden of the direct and indirect costs of historical and current exploitation are often abandoned to the devastating effects of climate change. And, worse still, once they are forced to migrate there is little or no protection in place for them.

Challenges – and community responses

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, natural hazards triggered approximately 24.8 million new displacements in 2019, affecting all inhabited continents; IDMC also cites predictions ranging from 100 million to 1 billion climate migrants by 2050.[1] Many South Asian, Southeast Asian and Pacific countries face severe climate change-related challenges. Coastal areas, for example, are threatened by the increased frequency and potency of storm surges, cyclones and sea level rise (which contributes to increased salinity). People have started to convert their rice paddies to salt-tolerant shrimp ponds but this adaptation measure has drastic consequences. Where there were once opportunities for paid labour on agricultural fields and a chance for subsistence agriculture, there are now powerful owners of shrimp companies, with foreign capital, trading their goods on international markets and marginalising the landless farmers.

In Indonesia, since 2000, fishermen in several locations on the north coast of Java have experienced the effects of rising sea level through the submergence of their villages and reductions in their catch. Their fishing boats used to have a crew of three to five fishermen but the reduced catch forces the fishermen to reduce the size of their crew. Masnuah, a 46-year-old woman who lives in the Demak district, went to sea for the first time to accompany her husband, whereas previously it would have been considered shameful for a fisherman to ask his wife to help in his work. She now chairs the Indonesian Fishermen Women's Association (PPNI[2]). Thanks to their advocacy work it has finally become acceptable for women to fish. Organising themselves was initially difficult because many people, particularly village elders and

religious figures, were convinced that joining PPNI was contradictory to being a woman.

PPNI now comprises 16 groups from northern Sumatra to West Timor who advocate for fisherwomen's rights. Until 2017 only men could obtain insurance – to pay for medical treatment and in the event of lives lost – but now women can get the same provision. PPNI also helps to strengthen the fishing economy through several projects such as providing training in processing fishery products. Advocacy work done by organisations such as PPNI is important because women working in fisheries and aquaculture sectors usually have lower wages, less recognition, less social and economic protection, and precarious and invisible jobs. These factors, combined with the reality that women in vulnerable contexts are often already more affected by the impacts of climate change than men are, add to the precarity of their livelihoods and therefore to the likelihood of them being forced to move.

Kodriyah, a 17-year-old Indonesian girl, has seen the population of her village decreasing over the last ten years, from 200 families until today when only her family remains. To reach her school, Kodriyah and her five-year-old sibling travel by small boat, paddling five kilometres to the nearest land to then continue by bicycle and bus. The ground floor of her house is now permanently covered by water, forcing her family to build a platform in their own home in order to stay dry. To reduce the impact of sea level rise, her family is planting mangrove trees for which they get occasional support from

AEER/Khoiron

Kodriyah outside her house.

a student-run organisation. Her mother, Pasijah, supports the family income by selling mangrove seedlings. Kodriyah hopes the government can help by undertaking more widespread mangrove planting and by building a dam so her village can be saved.

Adaptation measures such as these can help – but will not stop people from migrating once they lose their land and homes multiple times. According to the International Organization for Migration, up to 70% of residents in the slums of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, moved there as a result of environmental challenges. It is estimated that Bangladesh hosts six million such migrants, making climate change and environmental causes the country's primary drivers of internal migration, yet little assistance is provided to support those who have been displaced.

The Bangladeshi NGO Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust (COAST) is strengthening its work on climate adaptation measures and has been advocating for the government to develop a national displacement policy. The government has agreed in principle to develop such a policy and the NGOs have submitted a draft policy for their attention.

Local community responses include working not only on adaptation measures but also on mitigation measures. For example, the Bangladeshi National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports (NCBD) is fighting the root causes of climate change. NCBD was formed in 1998 to build the capacity of local communities to mount resistance to deals

Manila Conference participants protest with local activists and the community of Taliptip, Philippines.

that damage the environment, are against local people's interests and undermine the country's sustainable development. This broad alliance of political parties and organisations of – among others – students, peasants, workers, women, indigenous people, artists, teachers, writers, experts and journalists has campaigned on these issues for over 22 years. They are also fighting to protect the vulnerable Sundarbans region (including its UNESCO-protected mangrove forest) from the introduction of a coal-fired power station as the area is very important for protecting coastal areas from the impacts of climate change.

The power of networking, and the Manila Initiative

There is much to learn from NGOs and movements to support those affected by, and displaced by, climate change. In September 2019 the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung/Foundation (RLS) organised an International Solidarity Conference on the Rights of Climate Migrants in Manila, in the Philippines. The conference welcomed over 70 guests from more than 20 countries, bringing together academia and civil society actors to learn from each other, show solidarity, and build alliances to strengthen the power of their networks to fight climate injustice and to promote the rights of those displaced by the impacts of climate change.

Participants shared their personal stories, scientific findings, and what their organisations have learned (each with their own examples of localised solutions), plus responses from their governments. Bringing together those people who are currently leading the climate, development and migration conversations in their countries helped to unite them and demonstrate that this is one struggle with many fronts. Three NGOs co-organised the conference: Kalikasan, the International Migrants Alliance, and the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD); APMDD is also a member of the Demand Climate Justice Network – one of the leading international networks in the Global South working on the topic of climate justice.

Climate justice can, of course, be understood and approached in multiple ways, with many different nuances, but there is a common understanding that addressing the social, economic, environmental and political aspects of the climate crisis requires more than a few adaptation and mitigation measures. Climate action does not lead necessarily to climate justice.

Firstly, the richer countries of the Global North should be required to pay climate change compensation. This will require not only providing funding for adaptation and mitigation, but also taking responsibility for the historical ecological debt they owe, and ensuring that climate finance and technology are allocated and used equitably, democratically and appropriately. The policy of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" is a principle enshrined within the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change that acknowledges the different capabilities and differing responsibilities of individual countries in addressing climate change. And in 2013, after more than 20 years of international climate negotiations, the *Warsaw* International *Mechanism* for *Loss and Damage* stated that the impacts of climate change cannot be addressed by adaptation alone. In this respect displacement caused by the impacts of climate change always means a loss and therefore demands compensation, a crucial element in climate justice discourse.

"By not addressing climate justice as a central issue and by focusing more on adaptation, that was one way of containing migratory trends or displacement within the region itself without it being a burden of responsibility for the North." Meghna Guhathakurta, Research Initiative Bangladesh

Secondly, there needs to be legal recognition by the international community that those displaced by the impacts of climate change are a group in need of special protection. That means firstly that the right to move if your life is in danger has to be ensured. And secondly that after you have moved, other rights should be ensured – such as the right to medical assistance, legal protection, and education. Social security systems would of course be a major pillar of protection for those forced to move. It is to be hoped that the statement by the UN Human Rights Committee in January 2020 that "countries may not deport individuals who face climate change-induced conditions that violate the right to life" will exert pressure on other countries to change their immigration policies in order to allow those displaced by the impacts of climate change to claim asylum.

"We want our people to have the option to migrate with dignity should the time come that migration is unavoidable." Anote Tong, President of Kiribati (during the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2012)

Thirdly, there needs to be fundamental system changes, incorporating elements such as the Green New Deal and an international climate agreement that is rooted in science, equity and justice. For some countries that would imply a radical reduction in consumption, an end to fossil fuels, fair shouldering of the environmental and social costs, and incentives to support local and regional production.

In the light of discussions on the above, one major outcome of the September 2019 conference in Manila is the Manila Initiative on the Rights of Climate Migrants. This presents the conference participants' vision for the future and their demands for improvements, and issues a call to civil society and policymakers to sign up to the initiative.[3]

"We hope that [the Manila Initiative] will play a strong role in strengthening our voice on an international level because displacement issues are now losing momentum in both global climate negotiations as well as UN human right processes." Aminul Hoque, COAST, conference participant

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Lessons from internal climate migration in Mongolia

Simon Schoening

Rural communities in western Mongolia are increasingly abandoning their traditional livelihood systems. Strengthening the rural economy may lessen the need to migrate to urban areas but must take into account the long-term impacts of climate change.

The Centre for Rural Development at Berlin's Humboldt University recently conducted a study on the adaptation of rural livelihoods to structural and climatic changes in western Mongolia, and found that migration is one of the most common strategies implemented in the search for income and improved living conditions.[1] Since the 2000s, internal migration in Mongolia has been largely characterised by a unidirectional movement from rural to urban areas[2] with the country's capital, Ulaanbaatar, by far the most popular destination. More than 550,000 people have moved there in the past two decades alone, one-third of the city's current population.

Surveys suggest that 80% of all newcomers settle in the capital's outskirts. Ulaanbaatar's suburbs are known as the *ger* districts, taking their name from the traditional mobile homes made from felt used by the rural population and which they reassemble in their new urban destination. But living conditions in urban migrant settlements are precarious. Ulaanbaatar ranks among the most polluted cities in the world, in large part due to the burning of coal in the city's *ger* districts for heating during winter – creating pollution that has a significant impact on the health and well-being of migrant communities.

Given the rapid influx of people and growing pressure on the city's infrastructure and public services, to restrict internal migration the government introduced an official ban in 2017 whereby migrants were barred from registering at their new place of residence. Registration is a pre-condition for individuals to access basic public services and formal employment opportunities, and to receive legal support. Unregistered households have no legal basis for claiming housing or being granted permission to use land. Reports by local government officials confirm that pregnant women and newborns are in fact the only groups of people from unregistered households who are eligible for medical services.

However, people without permission to resettle continue to migrate to the city. While registration within a certain time period is required by law, only about half of people proceed with registering at their destination; many expect their migration to be temporary and therefore do not attempt to register. The government's migration ban subsequently not only worsens conditions for communities at their destination but also distorts data on migration flows.

Climate change and vulnerabilities

The annual mean surface temperature over the Mongolian territory has increased by 2.24°C since 1940, and warming is happening particularly fast in the mountainous regions of western Mongolia, home to more than 400,000 people. Rural lives in this part of the country are dominated by pastoral livestock keeping, horticulture and crop production. Recent years have seen extreme weather events – including the country's notorious winter storms, or *dzuds* – become more frequent and more devastating.[3] The 2009–10 *dzud* took the lives of more than ten million animals, equal to 24% of the country's entire livestock population, hiking up poverty in rural areas to 49%. As extreme weather events have become more severe in their scale, communities and their agricultural production systems are often left in a state of shock, with the rural population forced to resort to immediate coping strategies. Many find themselves unable to cope, however, and decide to abandon their rural livelihoods and move to the cities.

While the direct impacts of climate change may not be mentioned by surveyed households as the trigger point for abandoning traditional agricultural practices, the prolonged economic

impacts of such events certainly are. Once the number of livestock held by a household drops below a certain threshold (surveys suggest this is 200 animals), a family's quality of life is significantly impaired. Those left without any options to either restock or diversify their income locally are eventually forced to migrate in search of alternative incomes.

The severity of climate-induced shock events in Mongolia has in fact become a strong predictor for rural households to drop out of the pastoral economy. The same may hold true for slow-onset events such as decreasing surface water availability due to the melting of glaciers and more frequent drought events. Glaciers in the Mongolian Altai mountains have already shrunk by 30% since the 1940s, and resulting water shortages lead to local conflicts over the use of resources. The situation is set to intensify amid the currently unsustainable use and inadequate governance of water resources.

The underlying vulnerability of Mongolia's rural communities to the impacts of climate change is embedded in the country's recent political, social and economic developments. The State-controlled agricultural support system of the past provided those severely hit by weather-related losses with resources, cash transfers and in-kind contributions, ensuring the stability of the rural economy. Since the collapse of the country's socialist regime in the early 1990s, however, the management of risk exposure has been transferred into the hands of individual herders and farmers.

Today, herders can buy into market-based insurance schemes that issue pay-offs once a mortality rate of 6% of an insured herd is reached. While such insurance helps to mitigate some of the economic losses, asset-poor households are often unable to afford it. Others try to cope by taking loans, adding to the already high level of indebtedness in the rural economy. Notably, what has been found to offer adequate support for loss-affected pastoralists is the aid received from other herders in the form of livestock transfers. A renewed, donor-supported interest in the collective organisation of the rural economy and the formation of agricultural cooperatives further reflects the recognition of the role of social capital in dealing with the impacts of climate change on a local level.

Gender, income diversification and cultural heritage

The decision of rural households to migrate is mainly driven by their desire to access stable income opportunities and financial security. Many also seek to reunite with family members who have previously migrated. While women traditionally undertake caring duties and therefore often only limited or part-time income-generating work, they exercise a considerable degree of influence over a family's decision to migrate. Women play an important role with regard to managing household finances and ensuring children's access to education, often moving with children and young adults to urban centres while their male counterparts generate income in the rural economy. Such 'translocal' livelihoods, while not to be confused with permanent migration, are a common feature of family life in Mongolia, with many families being split during parts of the year at least.

Another important strategy of households that are dealing with external pressures is the diversification of their incomes. As mobile pastoralism and farming are poised to become increasingly difficult due to slow-onset climate change and shock events, many households have started to generate income from two or more sources, usually assigned on a gendered basis depending on customs and the availability of work. This either excludes women from certain income opportunities or creates additional workload.

While income diversification tends to benefit communities financially, it may come at a cost – and not only for female household members. Adaptation strategies, such as the permanent resettlement from rural to urban areas and the take-up of presumably more profitable and stable income sources, may over time erode communities' long-standing connectedness to place. Central to customs and norms in western Mongolia are beliefs about sacred sites, mountaintops and formations in the local landscape. As communities are forced to abandon traditional agricultural practices and their places of

origin, this may eventually lead to substantial disruptions in their tangible and intangible cultural assets, some of which have defined Mongolians' unique culture for millennia.

To stay or to go?

Although people and rural livelihood systems in Mongolia have historically shown a high degree of resilience, they are now becoming increasingly vulnerable. Serious concerns about the prospects of youth in particular were raised by rural community members during interviews:

"They [youth] all want to go to the [provincial] centres or Ulaanbaatar. […] Very few young people want to continue herding as a herder's life is quite tough and herders can't adapt to the climatic changes. […] I don't have any children who want to be herders in the future. The children want to be educated and then they want to get a job."

Others paint a more nuanced picture, recognising the absence of decent work opportunities in urban destinations:

"Children from herder families realise, 'why should I waste my parents' money to go to university and study something to then not find a job in this field.' […] Also, herders do not want to be unemployed; this is why they stay in the countryside."

Holistic solutions for strengthening the rural economy in the long term in order to counteract the need for internal migration as an adaptation strategy may therefore need to focus on:

- increasing the resilience of, and quality of life provided by, existing local livelihood systems (particularly for pastoralists and farmers) by providing direct assistance in the form of subsidies rather than loans or inaccessible insurance schemes to households identified as most at risk of sudden asset loss

- promoting cooperatives and the collective organisation of economic activities in agriculture and other sectors, drawing on existing social networks and thereby strengthening community self-reliance

- taking into consideration the needs of women in accessing income-generating work and creating year-round, diversified employment opportunities and relevant education for youth

- improving governance of natural resources by providing financial support to local water user groups (paying special attention to the needs of disadvantaged and downstream users), while also focusing on enhanced soil and pasture management practices

- monitoring migration flows by conducting regular surveys which reflect the combined longer-term impacts of climate-induced extreme weather events and slow-onset changes on households' economic situation.

Current efforts by international donors often either lack an adequate assessment of climate change or tend to duplicate past and ongoing development interventions. Government agencies, development finance institutions and the donor community must better integrate lessons learned, coordinate their activities (in education, health, employment, women's empowerment and capacity building for youth) and avoid promoting highly carbon-intensive practices that are unsustainable in the context of climate change. Lastly, reflecting the needs expressed by local communities, interventions should take a community-led, bottom-up participatory approach and adhere to the concept of sustainable adaptation by taking the projected long-term impacts of climate change into account when planning projects and programmes.

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Climate crisis, gender inequalities and local response in Somalia/Somaliland

Amy Croome and Muna Hussein

Various factors intersect when looking at the gendered effects of climate crisis on local communities in Somalia/Somaliland.

Climate-related shocks and humanitarian crises are closely inter-linked. As climate change becomes more extreme and unpredictable, hundreds of thousands of people living in poverty in Somalia are already paying a heavy price. As well as facing a fragile political situation after the collapse of the government in 1991, Somalia has experienced recurrent droughts which have in turn increased clan conflicts.[1] In 2018, 547,000 people (3.6% of its population) were newly displaced by extreme weather events[2] and it is expected that in 2020 6.3 million people will face acute food insecurity and 5.2 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance, of which 1.72 million people will be internally displaced.[3]

Gender inequality in Somalia/Somaliland[4] in general was already very high before the current climate crisis: women have less power and participation in economic, educational and political spheres, and gender-based violence, early girl-child marriage and female genital mutilation are all prevalent.[5] Now, climate shocks – creating resource scarcity and stress on livelihoods – have shifted many cultural norms in Somali society and are having an impact on gender dynamics.

The loss of livestock because of drought has resulted in men being unable to secure income for the family. This is causing tension and conflict in households and driving domestic violence towards women and children. Many men also turn to chewing the stimulant qat, which all communities interviewed reported as increasing domestic violence. Domestic violence has also increased as women have, in many cases, become the breadwinners – either through keeping and selling goats, becoming street vendors in camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) or in villages, or by taking up casual work in urban centres. This has caused a shift in gender roles and is perceived by some men as a threat to their role. In some cases, men leave their families to look for work in the cities, join the military, leave to escape clan violence, or die by suicide. Divorce rates have risen and female-headed households have become more common.

Caring and domestic work, traditionally the responsibility of women and girls, have become more demanding and time-consuming. Both firewood and water are increasingly scarce, resulting in women and girls walking longer distances to collect these resources. Girls are asked to support the increased daily domestic work, resulting in more girls dropping out of school. Furthermore, when parents cannot afford to register both boys and girls in school, they prioritise boys' education.

Resource scarcity has also increased clan conflicts as more groups compete over land, water and pasture. This is especially dangerous for men, who can easily become victims of revenge killings or armed clashes, and consequently limits their freedom of movement. Evictions and land disputes arising when people are displaced also cause violence, affecting mostly men.

Other forms of gender-based violence, such as rape, have also been on the rise. Women feel vulnerable at water points, open defecation areas, livestock grazing areas, areas where they collect firewood, on roads to markets and in their homes (because of lack of safe shelter and lighting). Perpetrators are men both from within and outside the community. Seeking justice for sexual violence or rape remains difficult as confidentiality is compromised when cases are reported in the community, the informal court system often imposes small fines on

Oxfam/Pablo Tasco

Women head to the water point in Eilmidgan village where Oxfam has built a water desalination plant.

perpetrators who are then released back into the community, and the formal systems are inaccessible due to distance and cost. Many women are raped during the night while sleeping, especially in those areas where clan conflicts happen frequently:

"My husband brought us here and left to find work. I have eight daughters and two sisters with me in this IDP camp. They are all under 17 years. I don't sleep at night. I keep on watching them to sleep safely. I try to sleep at noon time." (Woman from Fadhigaab IDP camp, Sanaag region)

When struggling to secure livelihoods, families will often marry their daughters to wealthy men and this was one of the main issues raised in focus group discussions, with many of the girls interviewed fearing early and forced marriage.

Communities have developed a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with the gendered effects of climate crisis and displacement. To avoid sexual violence and rape, women and girls travel in groups, change times they leave camps, do not share their movements with men for fear of being stalked, and carry sticks and torches, while elderly women collect water or look for missing livestock. Men in fear of revenge killings stay away from homes at night, either sleeping in hiding, staying awake in shifts, or sleeping outside and posting guards. Many men carry guns for their protection, travel in groups, use torches and keep in touch to warn each other of potential danger.

Local response and programming

The response to rising humanitarian needs is being met largely by the UN and international NGOs (INGOs), to whom most of the donor funding flows directly. However, much of the response is delivered by local and national NGOs, especially in conflict areas, to which international agencies lack access. Through the Grand Bargain agreement and the Charter for Change, donors and INGOs have committed to localisation – giving local and national organisations and Somali government agencies more direct funding and more space to lead humanitarian responses by, for example, increasing their participation in decision making.

However, while some progress has been made on localisation, the UN and INGOs still dominate the humanitarian system.

There are many local and national NGOs who are responding to the humanitarian needs caused by climate crisis in Somalia/ Somaliland, delivering a variety of activities to tackle the gendered effects of drought. Protection activities are widely undertaken and several organisations have referral systems and counselling for rape and sexual violence survivors whereby community members are trained to respond and refer survivors to medical centres and to help those seeking justice for the survivors. Many also carry out protection awareness-raising activities, visiting households and speaking about various issues such as domestic and sexual violence and explaining what women can do when they face such issues. A few organisations also deliver community awareness-raising activities, such as community dramas – performances of various situations with the help of actors. Local organisations understand that Somali society has strong oral traditions and that dramas are a good way to raise awareness and to generate discussions and reflection. Local actors are better placed than international actors to do this type of work as they have ongoing relationships with affected communities and have deep understanding of the cultural and religious context.

Local and international NGOs (and, to a certain extent, the government) have mainstreamed gender across the various activities such as WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), resilience and livelihood activities, unconditional cash transfers and cash-for-work programmes (serving both men and women). For example, when selecting beneficiaries, gender is carefully considered and female-headed households are taken into account. According to Nafisa Yusuf of the Somali women's rights network Nagaad: "In a drought those most affected are women and children […] Women are the first to know when the disaster is going to happen. They are the provider of the family. They know."

Local NGOs encourage women's leadership and participation in decision making, for example in IDP camp committees. Kamal Hassan Isak of local NGO HAVAYOCO explains that encouraging such roles requires a careful and culturally appropriate strategy: "We talk to men and women about women in the Quran, who are leaders, for example the Prophet's wife who was a business leader – people cannot refuse our Prophet." Many local organisations share that changing norms and perceptions of what women can and should do takes time, many discussions and the building of strong relationships. Given the limitations of both local and international NGOs when it comes to fully integrating gender in their work, it is important to make visible the gendered effects of the climate crisis. When the differences are researched, analysed and shared, all actors can more easily adapt their progamming.

Localisation – still waiting

The absolute and relative amounts of funding available to local Somali actors (State and non-State) remains very small. In 2017, direct funding of local/national actors accounted for 3.5% of overall humanitarian funding for Somalia, with the majority of this going to the government.[6] This has done little to change the power dynamics between international and national actors. All local and national NGOs we spoke with raised the fact that doing long-term work to shift norms is very difficult in a humanitarian system which often sees local actors as sub-contractors and where funding is short-term and project-dependent. "We have a programme [in women's leadership], it runs for a year, we train and engage, then it stops, and then we get new funding and we have to start again," says Nafisa Yusuf of Nagaad. Omer Jama Farah of local NGO Taakulo describes the humanitarian funding cycle and the slow dispersal of funding by saying "Aid comes when the rain comes".

Interviewees are worried about the long-term sustainability of efforts, and find it difficult to be able to lead in the sector when their access to decision-making spaces and their capacity to invest in their organisations remain limited. Restrictions

on how funds can be spent, which exclude work for organisational development, have a negative effect on local NGOs' managerial quality and technical competence and cause a vicious cycle that creates a deadlock for advancing the localisation agenda.[7]

More flexible and longer-term funding is needed for local organisations to create sustainable programmes and for these organisations to truly become leaders within the sector. Capacity building alone will not shift power but more and different kinds of funding and the recognition and inclusion of local NGOs as leaders could.

Climate justice advocacy

As the focus in Somalia/Somaliland thus far and for good reason has been on responding to humanitarian needs created by the climate crisis, there is not a large climate justice movement in the country. Local organisations currently do not have the capacity to mobilise and advocate for global policy changes, focusing instead on responding to the effects of climate crisis and the urgent needs of communities. But there is a lot of potential for local actors, and international agencies and local government, to build a coherent narrative around the climate crisis and to connect with global movements to reduce climate crisis effects. In countries like Somalia/Somaliland large numbers of people are being displaced by the climate crisis, despite not bearing the greatest responsibility for the emissions that contribute to climate change. The international community needs to make progress in providing new funds to help poorer countries support men and women affected by drought and other climate shocks, taking gender fully into consideration.

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Indigenous perspectives on gender, power and climate-related displacement

Sarah Pentlow

Across the Greater Mekong subregion, Indigenous Peoples are employing a range of strategies to respond to the effects of climate change and climate-related displacement.

The impacts of climate change are most severely felt by those who live closest to their natural habitats. Indigenous Peoples in the Greater Mekong subregion of Southeast Asia are facing threats to their livelihoods and traditional ways of life, and are being forced to migrate as an adaptation strategy. Within these communities, women bear the brunt of the work to adapt as they, culturally, are responsible for the food supply and livestock care.

In this context, the Climate Smart Women initiative[1] undertook village-level field research in selected Indigenous communities in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam to understand the gendered impacts of climate change at a community level and how communities are responding

in order to adapt, share knowledge and build resilience. At a gathering in Bangkok in December 2019, Indigenous Women leaders, policymakers and civil society representatives from across the region met to exchange knowledge and build connections in response to this growing crisis.[2]

Gendered impacts

Pre-existing inequalities are exacerbated by climate change, resulting in differentiated vulnerabilities. To understand these impacts at a community level, research teams examined gender roles within the household and labour roles linked to livelihoods.

There was a range of experiences among the communities, particularly relating to women's literacy and participation. In communities in Laos, women's low level of literacy limited their ability to participate in decision-making forums. One respondent said, "…only men go to meetings and women stay at home. So, women do not know about climate change or adaptation." However, in Cambodia, women held more power within the households: "In Krang Teh village, women are always active in seeking advice from the local authority to deal with the drought situation and [one woman] also encouraged her husband to purchase a pumping machine to rescue her rice and other crops."

Although the whole family contributes to a household's livelihoods, there are distinct gender roles in the division of labour. Within agriculture, women are involved in more of the frontline work of planting, weeding and cultivating home gardens, which means they are the first to experience the consequences of unpredictable and extreme weather patterns. As they seek new ways to manage these resources they increasingly experience 'time poverty' because of the additional roles they also fulfil within the household related to care-giving and cooking. Men take on more physically demanding jobs – whether on their land, in the forest, or as hired labour – and are usually the first to leave in search of employment when resources are scarce as they do not have the same household obligations as women.

In Myanmar, one woman told us that when her husband migrated to Malaysia for better employment opportunities, she had to take on management of all the household activities such as agricultural production as well as managing the remittances sent by her husband. However, despite what might be seen as gains in gender equality, the status of women continues to be lower than that of men. Female-headed households remain in communities which do not recognise women as having the same status as men and consequently suffer as a result.

Many seasonal workers leave their villages with their entire families during the lean periods when there is no agricultural work. This has become so commonplace that people view it as a livelihood adaptation to climate change. However, in discussions during the conference, participants expressed concern over how migration is increasing the vulnerability of already marginalised people and increasing risks of gender-based violence for women.

Women interviewed in Laos also pointed to the differential impact of displacement for women. They observed how women do not have information on safe migration and are forced to migrate without passports and work permits, and are unsafe travelling alone; that women lack independence to travel for work; that disasters have destroyed their homes; and that they lack income and jobs in the community. And in the event of natural disasters such as cyclones, typhoons or floods, women's responsibility for children and elderly people may hinder their own escape, access to shelter or access to health care, as was seen when Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in 2008.

A question of power over land

Indigenous Peoples hold ancestral rights to their lands but these rights are not always recognised or protected, even when appropriate legislation exists. In Cambodia, a national policy provides strong direction towards respect for and recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights and their role in the sustainable management of natural resources. However, threats from private

companies have pitted these rights against the interests of developers, resulting in rapid environmental degradation, deforestation and loss of land.

In Laos, land is allocated by the government but households are given smaller plots than their traditional farming practices require to produce sufficient food without resorting to herbicides. In other cases, land has been sold off to private companies. Some communities have been displaced by large hydroelectric projects and have been relocated to sites where they do not have access to land. But in the words of one activist, "Indigenous Peoples and forests cannot be separated; without forests, their lives will be gone."

Knowledge sharing and other adaptation strategies

There is a wide diversity of views and perspectives within communities concerning the possibility of adaptation to climate change:

"Local villages feel hopeless and don't know what to do about the future due to different weather. They don't know how to solve these problems. Even myself, I don't know how to deal with this, but I try to improve crop productivity." (Indigenous Woman leader from Myanmar)

"When there is flooding, we know to move to high lands with our family so we can survive. Trees are one of the resources to protect us from flooding. We know which ones to cut and which ones to keep to prevent the effects of climate change." (from report by Cambodian women)

Judging from the research done by the Climate Smart Women initiative, the selected communities in Cambodia appear to have employed successful adaptation strategies and are able to maintain their livelihoods without needing to leave their communities, in contrast to the communities in Laos and Myanmar. It is doubtlessly relevant that there is a stronger international NGO presence in Cambodia – INGOs of which the communities spoke favourably – than in Laos or Myanmar.

In Pu Chhorb village in Cambodia, for example, NGOs have supported climate change adaptation by working with local stakeholders (including networks of

Indigenous Women and of Indigenous Youth) to build a small reservoir to supply the village with water all year round, for household consumption as well as for irrigating home gardens. Similar experiences were found in Krang Teh in Cambodia where the NGO-led setting up of savings groups has contributed to the economic empowerment of Indigenous communities. Members are now more active in community business and enterprise groups; they have successfully implemented a model farmer and producer group, established agriculture cooperatives and farmers' networks, supported irrigation systems, and built capacity for business management.

However, reliance on NGO intervention cannot be the first port of call in responding to the challenge of climate-related displacement. In Cambodia, Indigenous communities are saying that "We think we could access information better. We want the Cambodian government to have Indigenous representatives at all levels, especially on the disaster committee."

In Myanmar, with the support of the UN Development Programme, local women-led civil society organisations known as 'township leading groups' were created to develop networks to support income-generation activities and capacity building for rural women, as well as to provide vocational training and awareness-raising workshops on trafficking and gender-based violence, health and nutrition. These individual village-level groups first gradually formed higher-level clusters for the sake of better coordination, then self-organised at the regional level, and finally created the country's first national network of rural women – May Doe Kabar (National Network of Rural Women[3]) – to connect rural women across the country and to share their needs with donors, development actors and the government.

A culture of learning and knowledge sharing exists among Indigenous Women as they share with each other and pass on their knowledge of farming and adaptation practices from one generation to another. Within the 18 key messages and recommendations to emerge from the Climate Smart Women Connect conference

in Bangkok in December 2019, half of them relate to knowledge sharing and exchange.[4]

One persistent challenge for local knowledge exchange is around language: there is a huge diversity of languages among Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia, not only between countries but within countries. Additionally, the reality is that much of the information around climate change, human rights and gender equality exists primarily in English.

One tool being used for knowledge exchange in Myanmar is the iWomen Inspiring Women app which was developed by MDK to enable rural women to have their voices heard through opinion polls, detailed surveys and storytelling. Rural women can gather evidence through the app on issues of concern such as gender-based violence or safe migration, which they can then share with other rural women, and with local and national government. As of May 2020, the app is being used by over 1,000 women across 31 different townships.

Recommendations for programming

Given the inter-generational nature of knowledge sharing between community members and the way in which whole families are involved in livelihood activities, any training or workshops on climate adaptation strategies or gender equality should take a **family-oriented approach**. This method was used in Laos as part of CARE's Remote Ethnic Women programme,[5] where it was successful in starting to break down social norms and gender barriers.

Emerging from the research was a clear call for specific **capacity building for women** to increase literacy, leadership skills and local political participation. The example of MDK is a model of how local village groups can evolve into national networks. However, women need the requisite skills to be able to participate.

The **role of external actors** should be limited to supporting community-led interventions, using their influence to build bridges with larger networks. In the Cambodian and Myanmar examples, it is clear that the technical assistance provided by development organisations has been helpful; however, often it needs more than just a technical intervention to shift gender norms – and it is the local people who have insight into what is needed in their communities.

A final recommendation is to **document traditional knowledge and practices** in order to preserve Indigenous knowledge and to influence policy. As one participant in Bangkok said:

"After attending the conference, I have realised that women in other countries also have the same challenges we have in Myanmar and I learned from them…. Therefore, we have to work together at a policy level on women's participation in climate change decision-making processes and [share information about] our challenges."

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1. This one-year project, implemented by Cuso International and Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact, was funded by Stockholm Environment Institute as part of their Strategic Collaboration fund and Global Affairs Canada Volunteer Cooperation Programme; the focus was on engaging with Indigenous Women in Southeast Asia for a more inclusive climate policy dialogue.

2. This was a joint research project and knowledge-sharing event convened by Cuso International and Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact. bit.ly/2Sxzdxu

3. Also known outside Myanmar as the Myanmar Rural Women's Network.

4. bit.ly/2HurOJd

5. See bit.ly/CARE-Laos-Remote

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Multiple mobilities in Pacific Islands communities

Fanny Thornton, Karen McNamara, Olivia Dun, Carol Farbotko, Celia McMichael, Merewalesi Yee, Sabira Coelho, Tim Westbury, Sharon James and Frances Namoumou

Types of mobility in the Pacific Islands are numerous and diverse. Case-studies from the region offer insights into the actions and agency of people, households and communities in the face of accelerating climate vulnerability.

The Pacific Islands feature prominently in global debates around climate-related mobility in light of the region's vulnerability to climate change impacts. Some estimates suggest that up to 1.7 million people in the region will migrate or be displaced by 2050 because of climate impacts.[1] Such movement manifests itself in various ways, including planned relocation of communities, migration from rural to urban areas (or towards main islands), and cross-border migration.[2]

Relocating – Fiji

In Fiji, at least 42 villages have been identified by the Fijian government for planned relocation as a potential adaptive response to climate change risks. The communities concerned are low-lying coastal sites that variously experience inundation of homes and ancestral burial grounds, shoreline erosion, storm surges, and saltwater intrusion into arable farmland and potable water sources. Several villages – some with the support of government ministries, donors and NGOs – have undertaken the process of relocating their homes, livelihoods and communities away from sites of environmental risk

The coastal village of Vunidogoloa in Vanua Levu, for example, relocated to higher ground in 2014 to reduce exposure to coastal erosion and inundation. The new location is about 2km inland – situated on customary clan land – and offers improved housing and infrastructure, access to farmland and livelihoods activities, and improved access to health and educational services, main roads and markets. The move was community-initiated with community members and leaders playing key roles in planning and decision making, and facilitated through partnerships and collaboration between community leaders and members,

church networks, donor agencies and the Provincial Council and government ministries. Challenges of relocation have included changes in diet and lifestyle (not least due to easier access to urban centres), disrupted attachment to place, lack of a place of worship (which is being addressed through community-funded construction of a church) and incomplete infrastructure. Other Fijian villages are also retreating from encroaching shorelines, both with and without government and donor support, although some are not relocating their entire community. In the coastal settlement Vunisavisavi in Vanua Levu, for example, in 2015 just four new houses were built (with donor support), beyond the inundation zone, while other houses were upgraded for cyclone proofing. Short-distance retreat of a few households has limited disruption to daily lives, livelihoods and place attachment.

These planned relocations offer lessons, including the need for: inclusive decision-making processes prior to, during and following relocation; continuation of spiritual and cultural lives of communities; maintained or improved standards of living, including access to services (health, education, markets) and infrastructure at household and community levels; and livelihood planning so that all community members can pursue sustainable livelihoods activities.

Drawn to the city – Fiji

Rural to urban migration can be a positive strategy for livelihood diversification and resilience building, including among communities facing climate risk in the Pacific Islands region where urban centres and main islands already attract large numbers of people. Some urban migrants channel part of their income towards efforts to build

resilience and adaptive capacity in rural and remote areas. Some residents of the rural Fijian village of Lobau, for example, have moved from agriculture and subsistence farming to working in the cash economy in urban centres but part of their income is directed to community projects and facilities – such as building and repairing Lobau's community hall which is used as an evacuation centre in times of disaster. Urban migrants also send cash to those who remain in the village, while villagers send local produce to those who have migrated to urban environments. Rural to urban migration in Fiji, and elsewhere in the region, not only can help people achieve sustainable livelihoods but also is increasingly used as a way of building resilience to environmental change and disaster (even though, as is true with most types of mobility, it can also involve risks). In rural areas, people's survival depends on a precarious mix of agricultural and non-agricultural sources of income. Greater engagement by, and support from, public authorities in ensuring that these sectors connect and complement one another are needed if livelihood strategies such as internal migration are to help improve livelihood outcomes for rural households.

Going abroad for work – to Australia
Australia's Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP), in operation since 2012, permits citizens from nine Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to work temporarily in the Australian agriculture and accommodation sectors. The purpose is to fill Australian labour gaps while contributing to economic development in the countries from which workers originate. Of 12 Solomon Island SWP migrants interviewed, all planned to use money they were earning in Australia to construct or upgrade housing in Solomon Islands. For example, one worker explained how upgrading his house from a thatched leaf construction to one of iron, concrete and timber would provide greater protection for his family during inclement weather. Another worker was considering exactly where to build his new house, given that his current house was situated very close to the coast and he had witnessed the encroachment of the shoreline over recent

years. Finally, one worker was contributing to the construction of a village guesthouse, on the premise that this might help attract NGOs to establish environmental projects in the village.

In short, climate resilience building is a key part of Pacific Island migrants' pursuit of work opportunities offshore. Given this, integrating training in building climate-ready housing – which is at the same time culturally, contextually and geographically relevant – into the SWP is one example of how addressing climate risk could be better mainstreamed into international labour mobility.

Renewing cultural attachment to place – Tuvalu
Funafala village in Tuvalu is only accessible by sea. Infrastructure there is limited, with no schools, shops or roads and with no public ferry service to the nation's capital, an hour away by small motorboat. Funafala, as with all of Tuvalu, is on a low-lying atoll and experiences coastal erosion. This remote island community, which has no cash economy, might reasonably be expected to be experiencing out-migration but in fact the opposite is true. The 10 households that comprise Funafala are well aware of climate change risk, particularly that stemming from sea-level rise, yet nobody plans to leave. On the contrary, the number of households is increasing. Why is this the case?

Funafala land is traditionally owned by the indigenous people of Funafuti, part of the same indigenous group who are also landholders in Tuvalu's capital. The village site has historically been an area of settlement for Funafuti people, but changes such as increasing urbanisation in the capital have meant population numbers have varied over time. The present community members all value the opportunity to live a more traditional life compared with life in the capital itself, and this is driving in-migration to the village. Fishing and household food cultivation provide at least partial subsistence livelihoods, and handicraft materials are easier to source here. Most households supplement their subsistence livelihoods with some paid employment in the capital. Water tanks and solar panels supply water

and power to all houses. Locally sourced and constructed sea walls are recent additions, and mangroves have been planted as protection against coastal erosion. The community has built a new chapel and a community hall. The community has lobbied for a school, which has been promised by the national government; when it is built, the population of Funafala is likely to increase further. Currently, families with children split their time between the capital and Funafala so that their children can attend school and indeed, the population of Funafala is currently lacking a younger cohort. The residents agree that more young families are likely to move to Funafala once a school is established.

Community members speak about the importance they attach to preserving their culture and health – priorities which they carefully balance against the longer-term risks of climate change. Currently, nobody feels physically unsafe, and the simple houses are relatively easily reparable from damage associated with flooding, storms and erosion. Funafala people are well aware of the prominent wider debates about Tuvalu becoming uninhabitable at some point in the future but meanwhile are renewing their indigenous connections to land while there is still time, building cultural and social as well as livelihoods resilience. The Funafala example aligns with the national policy priority in Tuvalu to adapt to climate change in situ. Physical fortification of low-lying islands, which is probably necessary to enable communities to remain on indigenous land in the long term, is an issue that needs to be more highly prioritised by Tuvalu's international partners. While the technical and financial challenges to achieving physical fortification are many, local cultural, social and environmental impacts will also need to be carefully considered should large-scale projects such as land reclamation become feasible.

Policy context

Affected island communities are pursuing a range of mobility strategies to lower their risk and to increase resilience and adaptive capacity; these strategies are undertaken at the individual, family and community level, and are distinctive in their variety of motivation, direction and outcome. Although much migration policymaking in the region is, for the time being, only broadly taking account of mobility pressures and processes in the climate change context, there are some dedicated policy instruments. For example, the Fijian government has developed national Planned Relocation Guidelines, launched at COP24 in 2018,[3] to guide stakeholders in all stages of the process of relocation in response to climate change. The Fijian government has also set up a Climate Relocation and Displaced People's Trust Fund (launched at the UN General Assembly in 2019): the world's first relocation fund for people who are displaced or who relocate due to climate change impacts. Meanwhile, Vanuatu has established a National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster Displacement, an instrument guiding public authorities and non-governmental actors in implementing sectoral and systems-oriented approaches where displacement occurs. However, moving from broad policy goals and guiding principles to clear directives and implementation arrangements for the Pacific Islands continues to prove challenging. In the meantime, any policy development needs to be based on a sound understanding of the reality of people's mobility strategies and the factors at play in their decision making. Importantly, policy development should recognise that people address climate risk (directly and indirectly) across the multiple places where they live and through the act of being mobile, and should incorporate innovative, flexible mechanisms of support.

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When the two seas met: preventive and self-managed relocation of the Nova Enseada community in Brazil

Giovanna Gini, Tatiana Mendonça Cardoso and Erika Pires Ramos

A collaboration between community members and researchers examines how a traditional coastal community in Brazil overcame environmental and legal challenges to manage their own relocation.

The Ilha do Cardoso, in the state of São Paulo on the south-east coast of Brazil, is home to the Enseada da Baleia community. As Caiçara people, their livelihoods depend on the particular characteristics of where they live, and include itinerant agriculture, artisanal fishing, extractivism, sustainable tourism and crafts activities. Enseada is located between two worlds – the sea and the estuary; this physical location is both part of their traditional identity and a contributor to the community's socio-environmental vulnerability over the years.

The island has long been affected by erosion caused by the destructive force of an ever more unpredictable sea; moreover, its designation in 1962 as a State conservation reserve led to the expulsion of many Caiçara communities and makes it difficult for those who remain to maintain a sustainable way of life. After several years, the combination of these forces destroyed the place where Enseada was, splitting the island in two and forcing a relocation.

Decision to relocate

"We need to start again. Our family is a big tree and needs to go to a new place and plant its roots." Malaquias Cardoso[1]

According to Enseada members, the effects of erosion began to become critical in the 1990s, prompting them to construct a sea wall. In 2008, the State Prosecutor launched an investigation into the situation and in 2013 the Forestry Foundation – which

Carol Mendoça

manages the reserve – set up a working group to monitor the area. At the request of the community, the State Public Defender began participating in meetings of the working group to ensure that the right to remain on the island was respected, in light of discussions being held about potential relocation. However, these first early attempts to organise relocation bore no fruit.

Between 2015 and 2016 the erosion process accelerated as a result of strong and frequent tidal surges, reducing the strip of sand that separates the estuary from the open sea from 22 to 12 metres. In October 2016, a very strong tidal undertow reduced the strip to a width of two metres, and it was this situation that urged the community to begin the process of relocation. The total rupture of the strip would leave the community submerged in a matter of hours. Leaving was the only option. The big question was how to summon up the courage to leave their only known home, and much negotiation and consultation within the community were needed to reach agreement.

The criteria for choosing a new area on the island for relocation were security (from a geographical point of view) and the possibility of maintaining traditional activities and generating sustainable income. At the request of the community, the new location's viability was corroborated in a study by a group of researchers.[2] The personal link with the land was what finally determined its identification: inhabited in the past by the former matriarch who assured the community that it had all essential resources – drinking water, fruit trees and fishing places.

Difficulties

State and municipal authorities offered two solutions to Enseada members: integration into another community on the island or transfer to the periphery of the nearest city. Both options were rejected by the community, since these would fundamentally change their relationships (within the community and with other communities), their lifestyle, their traditions, and their system of socio-political organisation. Since 2010, the community has been organised according to a system of economic and political feminism based on principles of solidarity, which has been key in the relocation process.

The authorisation for self-organised relocation only came after a difficult process, involving the intervention of the Public Defender's Office, the Prosecutor's Office and the State Secretary of the Environment. Negotiating relocation within a conservation area, especially in a national political environment that questions the rights of traditional communities, is extremely tricky. It was necessary to bring together the different entities involved, obtain the support of public bodies and elicit the support of wider society in order to ensure a constructive dialogue with the Park's management bodies. All this engagement was undertaken by the women of Enseada, who had organised themselves as the Association of Residents of Enseada da Baleia (AMEB, from the Portuguese).

"People who work don't get tired because everything is for the common good." Jorge Cardoso

Despite receiving authorisation, there was no State financial assistance – an obstacle that was overcome by the community by

drawing on their creativity, solidarity, traditions, and a lot of work. AMEB arranged the division of the area of land for houses, establishing a pyramid of priority where the most vulnerable were placed first. Any improvements to the original house structures had to be negotiated with the administrators of the park, since they were were not allowed to exceed the original number of square metres of each house being rebuilt in the new location.

Strategies

To achieve their objectives, the community instituted *mutirões* – a system of collective mobilisation to achieve a common goal, based on free, mutual help. These involved the participation of the extended community (tourists, friends and family from other regions and countries). Through such community networks, they raised funds to cover the cost of construction activities and materials and organised the transport of the materials.

"Without resources, the test of our resolve begins: you have to buy and transport the materials needed ... all predominantly through using the mutirões system of mobilisation." Tatiana Cardoso

Throughout the process, the entire community worked every day to rebuild their homes – construction work that prevented them from pursuing any income-generating activities. Women worked the land, cooked for the community, and soothed the children who missed their hammocks in the trees. The health of many people deteriorated because of the physical and emotional effort required.

The elderly had long been living in fear of relocation but for the younger people it was a time of renewal and the opportunity to seek and use new sources of knowledge. This attracted young people from the community who had emigrated to cities in search of work. The community saw their work as an example of resistance, where traditions combine with the ability to reinvent skills. The community took up residence in the new location, called Nova Enseada, in June 2017. When the force of the sea finally broke through the strip of sand in August

2018, destroying much of the community's material past, the community had by then successfully created a new beginning.

New challenges

"I'm very sad to leave here, but we are forced to by danger." Erci Malaquias (former matriarch)

The effects of the climate crisis are continuing to change the dynamics of fishing, water salinity, and the island's vegetation. Other communities that live on the island are also experiencing changes, and a new era is beginning – that of dialogue between the communities in an attempt to understand what is happening. By continuing the work that has been started, and in the spirit of solidarity that has been built through this long and difficult process of relocation, the islanders are hopeful of devising ways to protect their community before a new crisis arises. They currently plan to continue defending their territory, especially from speculation from the private sector and from a State-backed proposal to privatise the management of the island that threaten the integrity of the territory, life and permanence of the Caiçara communities on Cardoso Island.

What have we learned?

"Each community has its way of working, its way of living." Antonio Mario Mendonça

The experience of the Nova Enseada community is a successful case of relocation, enabled by years of empowerment and political awareness. However, it is also a case of climate injustice, given their abandonment by the State. Despite greater global awareness around the need for recognition and protection of those affected by the impacts of climate change, many local communities remain invisible for several reasons. In the case of Enseada we identify the following reasons:

Legal invisibility: The lack of normative and institutional governance for these contexts meant a series of ad hoc strategies had to be devised by the community. This

Carol Mendonça

legal invisibility increases community vulnerability and precariousness – exacerbated by emotional and economic stress and by the conflicts between the different parties who are either directly or indirectly involved (neighbouring communities, park management and local authorities).

Political invisibility: The strategy of self-identification as a traditional Caiçara population experiencing vulnerability in the face of the forces of nature was essential to their fight to stay in the territory and ensure that their identity, culture and rights were respected by the State. Traditional wisdom combined with academic and scientific studies resulted in the harmonisation of different knowledge systems to facilitate effective and fairer relocation. The use of *mutirões* demonstrated that community-based solutions are less intrusive and more efficient than strategies based on a top-down approach. And from these practices emerged an inter-community capacity to cope with shared risks and obstacles. However, the lack of political response by the State to the frequent storms and the relentless erosion that forced the relocation demonstrates a disconnect between the narrative in international arenas and local realities.

Emotional invisibility: The local authorities gave no consideration to the emotional impacts involved. Members of the Enseada community knew it was crucial not to lose heart during the relocation process and for everyone to feel included in the decision-making process; they also recognised that the relocation process would not be complete until they not only had rebuilt the same physical structures as before but had also learned to understand and adapt to the changing environment and to construct memories linking them to the new place.

"I go with my broken heart … it was here that we created ourselves." Débora Mendonça

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1. All the quotations are from members of the community, and are taken from the following audiovisual recordings: *Tomorrow has come* http://oamanhaehoje.com.br/eng/; *Vazantes* https://curtadoc.tv/curta/cultura-popular/vazantes/; *Alta da maré expulsa pescadores de vila centenária* www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrRdQ-8EDs4; *Ajude a Nova Enseada! Ilha do Cardoso* www.youtube.com/watch?v=qu1b5AhfWIc&feature=youtu.be

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The same ruler for everyone: improving trafficking estimates

Joshua Youle and Abigail Long

Current guidelines for measuring the prevalence of trafficking are inadequate. Improving the accuracy of trafficking estimates will require comprehensive, standardised guidelines which have been rigorously tested in the field.

Donors increasingly call upon their grant recipients to conduct survey research in order to estimate the number of victims of trafficking in a target region or industry. Donors use these estimates to plan resource allocation, inform programme design, and engage with other governments. They also look to these estimates for empirical proof that an anti-trafficking programme is reducing the prevalence (the number of detected victims) of trafficking. However, most organisations do not include prevalence of victims as an indicator of success because there are no comprehensive, standardised guidelines which academics or researchers employed by these organisations could feasibly use to implement prevalence estimate methodologies. This means researchers develop survey instruments and methodologies that, although context-specific, do not benefit from systematic field-testing, are difficult to broaden out for general use and do not lend themselves to prevalence comparisons. Those prevalence estimates that have been published so far have faced criticism and scepticism. Existing guidelines are not inclusive and are challenging for smaller organisations (a considerable proportion of those engaged in fighting trafficking) to implement.

Current metrics

The Global Slavery Index (GSI) provides national and regional estimates of the number of people in modern slavery.[1] It receives considerable media attention and its figures are frequently cited by organisations and governments. The most granular estimates that the GSI provides are at a national level. In order to provide a useful metric of success for an anti-trafficking programme, the programme would need to be implemented at that same level. However, most anti-trafficking organisations usually implement programmes at a sub-national level, focusing on a handful of municipalities and often a specific type of trafficking. It would be difficult to demonstrate using the GSI data that any such anti-trafficking programme contributes to a decrease in national prevalence, given the many other forces at play on a national level. While the GSI continues to refine its methods and is likely to be able to produce sub-national estimates in the future, due to the immense expense of compiling the index the exercise is only carried out approximately every two years. For an organisation to use it as a baseline the organisation would need to coordinate its intervention with timing of GSI data collection, which is not always possible. Thus for national or regional programmes, the GSI figure can only provide indications of trends.

In 2012 the International Labour Organization (ILO) published survey guidelines[2] which contain detailed steps for national governments to implement a survey on forced labour, including definitions, assessment tools, ethical considerations and guidance on data analysis. Although useful for governments looking to obtain the full picture of forced labour in their country the guidelines are limited. The ILO itself called these guidelines "a starting point" and we believe it is now time to expand them to include additional methods targeting a wider research audience. The International Conference of Labour Statisticians, which is convened by the ILO, published guidelines on the measurement of forced labour in 2018 that largely focus on randomised household or establishment surveys.[3]

However, most organisations or government agencies focused on trafficking have limited budgets and cannot afford to implement these. Consequently, many organisations end up using referral-based sampling methods (such as snowball sampling), which have been proven in other fields to better identify members of a hidden population. Other means of collecting data to measure prevalence are generally implemented in an ad hoc manner and rarely have a direct connection with a programme.

Legal definitions
A common statistical definition of trafficking has eluded researchers, in part due to the existence of different and sometimes overlapping international and national definitions. For example, international law uses the definition of forced labour in ILO Convention 29, requiring both involuntariness and the threat of a penalty; instead the Palermo Protocol[4] defines trafficking as requiring an act, means and purpose. Despite the technical language, forced labour and labour trafficking both refer to compelling (and profiting from) the labour or services of others. While the 'means' of force, fraud or coercion and the 'purpose' of compelling individuals for labour services might be the same across both definitions, confusion for measurement arises around the 'acts', such as recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt, which are not part of the ILO's definition. This raises key questions for researchers: whether, for example, scientists should measure forced labour by the ILO's standards in order to demonstrate the prevalence of trafficking; and whether scientists need always to include the 'act' in surveys.

Another difficulty is applying international norms at a national level. Under the Palermo Protocol, movement is not required to constitute trafficking. However, some national governments have enacted domestic anti-trafficking legislation that does require some form of movement. These varying definitions can be an obstacle to researchers comparing national administrative data.

Forced migration and trafficking
Movement makes it more difficult not only to measure vulnerability and prevalence within a population, and to compare results with other studies, but also to reach vulnerable populations within migration flows. Many studies attempt to measure prevalence of trafficking by interviewing returnees, who can be more accessible than workers in destination countries or those who are in transit. However, research with returnees must take into account several factors that may limit the study. For example, exploited individuals may have small social or isolated networks and if using a referral or network-based sampling method, the resultant prevalence estimate will probably be too low. That research may have identified how many returnees themselves were subject to exploitation but not have captured the total trafficked population in the migration flow.

Additionally, forced migrants often do not use formal channels but instead move irregularly and may use smuggling networks. Forced migration routes may differ in each scenario, exacerbating the measurement difficulties of referral-based sampling and severely limiting the ability to conduct traditional household or establishment surveys.

Common methodologies
Trafficking researchers have used a wide variety of methods to calculate prevalence estimates. The most traditional survey sampling methods select a random **sample of households or establishments** from a complete list, such as a government census. Using their survey questions, they attempt to identify respondents who may be victims of trafficking. Because everyone in the population had the same likelihood of being included in the survey, the researchers are able to generalise the results to a larger population. Hidden populations, however, who are often obscured from these lists, make this problematic and random sampling is therefore likely to under-report trafficking victims.

Snowball sampling entails asking respondents to report on what they know of the trafficking experiences of members of their social networks. With enough waves

of sampling the results are seen as being representative of the general population, even though not every member of the population had an equal probability of being selected. However, snowball sampling in anti-trafficking studies tends to start with a known group of people who are connected to victims or who are victims themselves. Consequently, the final estimate is likely to over-report prevalence of trafficking in the general population. The true prevalence estimate is likely to be somewhere between the estimates produced by random and snowball sampling.

Multiple systems estimation is based on lists of trafficking victims detected and recorded by local authorities. It requires a country to have at least two lists from different sources with a minimum of around 80 victims.[5] This technique is most frequently employed in high-income countries that have strong data systems.

While these methods provide a tremendous insight into the prevalence of trafficking, no single method provides a complete picture of the extent of the crime or of the victims' experiences. Each method has advantages in relation to evaluating certain types of crimes, environments or populations and, correlatively, each has its drawbacks. The chief difficulties have centred on researchers' lack of awareness of situations in which individuals are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked and the frequent inability or unwillingness of respondents to identify themselves as having experienced trafficking. This may be because of fear of stigma (no matter how strong the assurances of confidentiality); because respondents may not know that they are victims of trafficking; or because they fear retribution from their trafficker.

Another problem is the reliance on primary data for measuring programme success. Organisations increasingly see the value and importance of strong data collection and management practices, but it will indeed take a sea change before best practice principles are integrated into every organisation. If data collection and management practices were stronger, these could be heavily relied upon to validate estimates or even to develop estimates where there is insufficient budget to carry out new data collection.

Recommendations

This leads us to make three recommendations that we feel would help drive better data collection and management and lead to more accurate estimation of trafficking prevalence:

Develop comprehensive standardised guidelines: Given that no methodology provides a fully comprehensive estimate, guidelines are needed in order to help groups determine which method to use based on demographic factors, type of trafficking and their budget and timing constraints. These guidelines should be evidence-based, meaning that there needs to be further testing of each method. They must focus on returning the most precise estimates possible, in order for researchers to be able to confidently detect the effect that a programme has had on prevalence. Survivors should be consulted in the development of the guidelines and in the implementation of each methodology.

Utilise an impact evaluation methodology: Conducting and comparing prevalence estimates at the beginning and end of programme implementation can show an increase or a decrease but only through setting up a control group can a change in prevalence be attributed to the impact of the programme. While this impact evaluation methodology does not have to be used for every programme it should certainly be used for new programmes and to inform decisions about whether to expand existing programmes.

Involve new academics: Trafficking is an interdisciplinary topic that would benefit from the focus of a greater number and variety of researchers. When looking for partners, organisations should target emerging scholars and academics not customarily engaged in the trafficking arena, possibly from fields such as criminology, sociology, social work, economics, demography and public health. Their fresh perspectives can unearth new insights and help make much-needed progress. Combatting trafficking requires a scientifically rigorous, interdisciplinary response that does justice to the experiences of the victims.

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Understanding the psychological effects of sex trafficking to inform service delivery

Jennifer McQuaid

Those providing assistance to survivors of trafficking should focus not only on the delivery of services but also on building survivors' capacity to engage in treatment and support.

When trafficked for sexual exploitation, women are subjected to extraordinary physical, sexual and psychological violence which puts them acutely at risk for developing not just short-term physical ailments but also lasting mental illness that can profoundly alter their ability to navigate effectively in the social world. Survivors may be dealing with HIV infections, experience gynaecological issues, succumb to substance and alcohol abuse, and suffer the prolonged effects of physical injury. The impacts on their mental health include anxiety, depression, self-harm and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Violent exploitation may also result in survivors developing a mistrust of care-giving individuals and systems, which can severely hinder service delivery. Sex trafficking disrupts caregiving by hijacking the victim's relationship with trust and security. Victims rely on their traffickers to provide them with food and shelter but to obtain these victims must work, and that work involves sexual violence and coercion. The hand that feeds and gives shelter and promises a path to safety is therefore also the hand that leads to injury and persecution.

This severe rupturing of attachment relationships can have a significant impact on survivors – disrupting their sense of self and affecting their ability to leave exploitative situations, rebuild themselves emotionally and engage with services. After periods of imposed isolation, a loss of autonomy and forced servitude, survivors report feeling helpless and hopeless, struggling to feel competent with life skills, ashamed about their past victimisation, and angry about missed education and job training. Many feel lost in their personal search for identity and meaning. Regulating difficult emotions and interpersonal relationships can be challenging. All told, the effects of sex trafficking are wide-reaching, profound and often not well understood. Signs and symptoms of psychological distress may also fall outside diagnostic categories and manifest in cultural idioms of distress. Systems of care that adequately account for these experiences have a far greater chance of success.[1]

The road map of complex PTSD
The traditional reliance on PTSD as a diagnostic means of describing distress and

then subsequently guiding treatment falls short of capturing the long-term effects of such debilitating trauma. Instead, 'complex PTSD' was developed as a framework for understanding the effects of complex trauma – trauma that is prolonged, repeated and interpersonal in nature, and from which escape is not possible due to physical, psychological, maturational, environmental or social constraints. Well-accepted examples of complex trauma include child abuse, domestic violence, sex trafficking and other forms of modern slavery, situations of genocide or organised torture campaigns. Complex PTSD includes the core defining symptoms of PTSD (re-experiencing, avoidance or numbing, and hyper-arousal) as well as disturbances to the regulation of emotion, interpersonal relationships, conception of self, consciousness and systems of meaning.[2] Complex PTSD has been suggested as the most accurate way to describe the deep disruptions to psychological functioning that are experienced by survivors of sex trafficking.[3]

Incorporating a complex-trauma informed approach

By incorporating an understanding of complex trauma into their approach, clinicians and humanitarian aid workers can build their capacities to bridge the divide between need and engagement. Several steps could help in doing this:

Recognise that providing for a survivor's unmet needs sets the stage for their recovery: Attending to physical safety, nutrition and general health-care needs sets the stage for psychological healing.

Incorporate elements of evidence-based treatment: Integrating ideas from the cognitive model of PTSD may enhance service delivery. This approach is anchored in the idea that appraisals of self and one's place in the world play important roles in the maintenance or remission of trauma symptoms. For example, attributing blame to oneself for negative life events has been shown to impede recovery. Psycho-

education about the effects of sexual violence – particularly the strategies that perpetrators deploy to create isolation and decrease victims' sense of self-worth – can be interwoven into programming. Also consider incorporating Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT), an evidence-based treatment focused on linking life events – grief, interpersonal conflict, role transitions and/or social isolation – with symptoms of distress. IPT helps individuals build skills that fight helplessness and hopelessness even in situations of extreme adversity.[4] The treatment is recommended in the World Health Organization/UNHCR *mhGAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide* as an effective first-line treatment for depression that can be delivered by trained and supervised non-mental health community workers in low- and middle- income countries.[5]

Develop awareness of triggering interactions and incorporate opportunities for choice and autonomy: A relationship might become fraught when a well-intentioned clinical provider introduces a legal or programmatic framework that is perceived as controlling or disenfranchising. For example, conversations about safe, effective parenting may backfire if they are undertaken with a punitive or overly authoritative tone. Similarly, interventions addressing 'harm to self' or 'harm to others' can be especially difficult. A trusted relationship can suddenly collapse if a service provider triggers memories of a trafficker by restricting freedom and autonomy. In these circumstances, providers should remember that loss of will and the ensuing feelings of fear may trigger anxiety and even dissociation in survivors, because in the past similar situations have signalled impending harm or assault.

Realise that rejecting treatment may be a way of communicating distress: Moments in which we, as providers, feel ineffective, or in which a survivor disengages or rejects agreed-upon goals or work, are the very moments when we need to pause and reflect on what is happening. Ask yourself

if you can understand the interaction in light of the survivor's trauma history. It can also help to ask a colleague for their insights. For example, from a programmatic perspective, a certain housing plan or educational requirement might feel logical and even necessary. But for a survivor of sexual exploitation, it may feel like they are becoming ensnared in something with which they do not agree. Perhaps a survivor is resisting attending educational classes or job training. Consider the possibility that these situations might activate feelings of disappointment, irritability and self-blame related to lost time and opportunity as a result of being trafficked. Take the time to bring empathy into the relationship and solve problems collaboratively in order to support survivors in taking the steps needed to engage in services.

Increase opportunities for social support:
The strategic abuse and forced isolation imposed by traffickers result in shame, learned helplessness and mistrust. The effects of participating in survivor support groups cannot be overestimated. The validation, emotional connection and practical support provided by fellow survivors and group leaders encourage women to explore relying on others and building attachments. Parenting groups enable survivors to experience support from other mothers, to share feelings in a safe space, and gain information and guidance. Parenting group leaders can pay particular attention to processing 'flashpoints' – moments when interactions with children trigger feelings of vulnerability or set off a cascade of re-experiencing symptoms. By working through these moments in the group, mothers may feel better understood, better equipped to manage their parenting responsibilities, and possibly more confident in moments of intimate connection with their children.

Address vicarious traumatisation: The isolating and paralysing effects of trauma can transfer to care providers. Service providers should implement group consultation and provide staff with adequate supervision. They should also consider establishing co-leadership of support groups. This allows for staff reflection and peer supervision while decreasing the burnout that comes from working independently and holding the weight of stories alone.

Consider the WHO/UNHCR recommendation to include mental health in primary care: The *mhGAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide* calls upon humanitarian actors to routinely include mental health programming in primary care settings. [6] Service providers should consider placing mental health practitioners in primary care or maternity clinics. Despite their need for gynecological and obstetrical care, survivors of sexual exploitation may avoid routine gynaecological or antenatal visits because examinations are a source of distress. Clinicians working in this area are in a unique position to help survivors build positive associations with medical care, and maternal health clinics are ideal venues for parenting groups.

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Addressing trafficking in the sex industry: time to recognise the contribution of sex workers

Borislav Gerasimov

Efforts to combat trafficking in the sex industry must respect sex workers' decisions and agency, and recognise them and their organisations as legitimate stakeholders in the anti-trafficking movement.

Anti-trafficking activism has greatly increased since the adoption of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2000.[1] Anti-trafficking efforts have attracted millions of dollars in funding and the activity of a diverse set of actors. These now include government institutions, international organisations, civil society organisations from the women's rights, migrants' rights and labour rights movements, trade unions, faith-based groups, and even for-profit entities.[2] These groups engage in one or more aspects of the three 'pillars' of anti-trafficking work as laid out in the UN Protocol: prevention, protection and prosecution.

In 2009, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton added a fourth 'pillar' – partnerships – emphasising the need for more effective collaboration and coordination between actors. Since then, it has been institutionalised through various national and international multi-stakeholder working groups. Notably absent from the institutionalised response, however, have been organisations representing the interests of people in the sex industry. The exclusion of sex workers and their organisations from the development of policies that affect them is nothing new. Rooted in traditionally moralistic and stigmatising views of sex workers, this exclusion has more recently been shaped by the conceptualisation by feminist thinkers from the Global North of sex work as a form of violence against women, to which women cannot meaningfully consent. Such views have shaped anti-trafficking work and reinforced the marginalisation of sex workers, with hugely negative impacts on their lives, work and well-being.[3]

Research published by the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)[4] in 2018, on which this article is based, documents the strategies that sex workers and their organisations employ to prevent and address violence, coercion and exploitation in the sex industry, including instances of trafficking. It demonstrates clearly that they need to be viewed as key partners in the fight against trafficking.[5]

Knowledge is power

Despite operating in different contexts, the sex worker organisations whose representatives were interviewed by GAATW take the same approach to supporting sex workers. They each operate a space which serves as an accessible drop-in centre, where community members can share meals, establish friendships and discuss issues that concern them. They can also access a range of services, from language classes to support groups, counselling and health services. All the organisations also conduct outreach to sex workers – listening, advising, intervening and making referrals, as dictated by the individual's needs.

For example, in Thailand the organisation Empower organises Thai and English language classes for sex workers. These classes are useful not only for work with clients (for example, to negotiate services and prices and avoid miscommunication) but also if the sex worker decides to leave the industry and take up other work. All the organisations provide legal advice to sex workers, directly or through referral, including in relation to disputes with clients and managers, or about their immigration status. Several provide information to new sex workers about safe areas for work, how to communicate and

Sex workers protest in South Africa during a trial for the murder of a sex worker.

Lesego Tlhwale

and the criminal and administrative penalties for sex work, as well as establishing a respectful relationship between sex workers and the police, would facilitate the identification (including self-identification) of victims of trafficking in the industry.

Community solutions

Our research also shows that sex workers use their own resources to offer assistance to peers. In Durban, South Africa, peer outreach educators from the organisation Sisonke encountered young women and adolescent girls who were being controlled by a pimp standing nearby. Under the guise of distributing condoms, they managed to give the number of the organisation's helpline to the girls, who later called, and the helpline staff reported the matter to the police. This led eventually to the successful prosecution of one of South Africa's largest cases of the trafficking of children for sexual exploitation.

In India, one of the committees of the Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad (VAMP) sex worker collective was approached by the madam of a brothel, who suspected that a girl brought to her by a pimp was a minor. When committee members went to the brothel to investigate, the pimp took the girl away in a taxi to another brothel area. The committee alerted their counterparts in that area, who discovered where the pimp took the girl. Committee members found her, verified that she was indeed a minor, contacted her parents, provided counselling to them and to the girl, and referred them to the police. Although the pimp escaped again, the action taken by the committee women had such an impact that he never returned to that community.

What these and other cases documented in the GAATW research have in common is that the solutions are not always obvious or conventional; in some cases, sex workers have to get creative in order to find the best solution. Traditional anti-trafficking measures

negotiate with clients and which clients to avoid, how and where to advertise and what prices to charge. This kind of information provision about laws, rights and conditions of work is an established good practice to reduce the vulnerability of migrants and low-wage workers to exploitation and abuse, including trafficking, and many anti-trafficking organisations engage in such work.

All the organisations whose staff we spoke with also engage in public activities – lectures, rallies, work with the media or policy advocacy – to address the criminalisation and stigmatisation of sex work. This is important because traffickers exploit this criminalisation and stigma in order to keep victims under their control, convincing them that if they go to the police they will not be believed but will instead be arrested and jailed for prostitution and, in the case of migrants, deported. Removing the stigma

to identify victims such as 'raid and rescue' operations led by NGOs or by the police are typically violent and traumatic events for both sex workers and victims of trafficking.[6] Our research shows that the peer-led interventions, by contrast, are person-focused and sensitive to the realities of the industry.

In some of the countries in which we conducted our research, sex worker organisations have formed pragmatic, if sometimes uneasy, cooperation with State bodies and NGOs to address suspected cases of trafficking. For example, in South Africa, SWEAT and Sisonke have occasionally collaborated with the National Human Trafficking Resource Line, and in India some police officers recognise the need to work with VAMP to prevent trafficking.

However, in most cases sex worker organisations are excluded at the institutional and policy levels. In Spain, the organisation Hetaira was denied a place in the national anti-trafficking NGO network. In South Africa, SWEAT had to leave the Western Cape Counter-Trafficking Coalition due to hostilities from other members relating to their position on sex work.

A shared agenda

Ultimately, sex worker organisations are workers' rights organisations whose primary mandate is to ensure that the human, economic, social, political and labour rights of their constituents are respected by State and non-State actors. At some level, their work is very similar to the work of the anti-trafficking NGOs which are members of GAATW. For example, sex worker organisations provide information about rights and working conditions, and where to seek help in cases of rights violations. In the anti-trafficking field, this is commonly referred to as prevention, awareness-raising or empowerment. In cases of rights violations including trafficking, sex worker organisations offer assistance with: filing complaints and dealing with the police, courts and immigration authorities; meeting basic needs; providing psychosocial counselling and family mediation; and helping women return to the community and find employment. In anti-trafficking

programming these are broadly referred to as (re)integration or social inclusion services.

The automatic, inaccurate conflation of all sex work with trafficking, and the view of all prostitution as exploitation, prevent many anti-trafficking organisations from seeing the similarities between their agenda and work and that of sex workers' organisations. Yet the two are not incompatible: sex worker organisations can address situations of trafficking, and anti-trafficking organisations can respect the rights of sex workers. We hope that the GAATW research can lead to a new approach that respects sex workers' decisions and agency and recognises them as essential partners in combatting human trafficking.

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The return of vulnerable asylum seekers to Italy: protecting victims of trafficking

Lucia Della Torre, Adriana Romer and Margarite Zoeteweij

The inadequacy of Italy's reception conditions for vulnerable asylum seekers raises serious questions about the legitimacy of Dublin transfers of those who have been trafficked.

Through the Dublin III Regulation[1] an EU Member State can be requested by another Member State to take back an asylum seeker who has previously applied for asylum in their first country of asylum. The application of this Regulation places disproportionate pressure on the asylum systems of those countries whose borders also form part of the external borders of the EU, of which Italy is one. The result of this pressure, combined with recent political and legal developments in Italy, means that the specific needs of vulnerable asylum seekers – which includes victims of trafficking – are often inadequately identified and met, casting doubt over the legitimacy of these 'Dublin transfers'.

Early identification of potential victims of trafficking in the asylum procedure is crucial in order to grant them the best possible conditions in which to properly present their asylum claim, and to protect them from further exploitation. The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings outlines how each Member State must ensure its authorities have staff who are trained and qualified in identifying and assisting survivors.

However, Italy's asylum procedure lacks a general screening for vulnerabilities and it falls short of these obligations. Anti-trafficking NGOs report that it is their own personnel who refer most of their cases, or referrals come from trained social workers employed by reception centres; very few come from the local police (and even then not always from those officers who are involved in registering asylum seekers).

The asylum procedure in Italy begins with the lodging of an asylum application at the local police station. Biometric data are collected – either immediately, if capacity allows, or at a later stage. A written statement is also recorded, which is taken a few weeks or sometimes a few months after the application is first registered. The invitation to appear before the local Territorial Commission (which is responsible for examining asylum applications) is issued only after the statement is processed and, accordingly, an appearance before the Commission takes place at least a few months into the asylum procedure. For those who have been trafficked, this means that they spend a significant amount of time in the asylum procedure before being properly identified.

In cooperation with UNHCR and the European Asylum Support Office, the Italian Ministry of the Interior has published guidelines[2] for identifying victims of trafficking among applicants for international protection. Designed specifically for Territorial Commissions, they allow for the asylum procedure to be halted for up to four months if the Commission believes an applicant may have been trafficked. During this period, the applicant is referred to a specialised local NGO, as recommended in the guidelines. After interviewing the applicant, the organisation gives the Territorial Commission its assessment of the applicant's claim to have been trafficked and its relevance for the individual's claim for international protection.

In interviews conducted in September 2019 as part of an OSAR report on reception conditions in Italy,[3] employees of these local NGOs and Territorial Commissions reported that the publication of the government guidelines and the training provided to staff have had a positive impact on their collaboration, and that the number of referrals coming from the Territorial Commissions has increased. But although this increase in referrals is good news, the funding and

resources available to local NGOs have not increased accordingly. As a result, local NGOs lack capacity to adequately assist all those who are referred to them.[4]

The Salvini Decree and reception conditions

With the coming into force of the Salvini Decree in October 2018, which amended several articles of Italian migration law, the situation for victims of trafficking has deteriorated even further. As well as abolishing humanitarian protection status (which had been used to a considerable extent for asylum seekers who did not meet the criteria to receive international protection), vulnerable asylum seekers – including those who have been trafficked – can no longer access reception centres which offer individual reception programmes. These are now reserved for people with international protection status or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children; those who do not fall into these categories are now only entitled to access larger, collective centres.

Concurrently, the financial contribution of the State towards those accommodated in these collective reception centres was reduced from around €35 to just €18 per day. This has led to a fall in the level of qualifications and experience of centre personnel and changed the ratio of asylum seekers to employees from ten-to-one to fifty-to-one. Centres with a capacity of less than 150 are not expected to have staff on duty through the night. Numbers of professional staff such as cultural mediators, social assistants and medical staff have been drastically reduced, and psychological support removed entirely. Qualified personnel are unable to spend more than a few minutes with each asylum seeker per week. The lack of personal contact and time does not allow for the building of a relationship of trust, nor does it give personnel the necessary time to identify residents' vulnerabilities and take appropriate measures. These changes have led to an unwillingness on the part of some charitable organisations to continue administering these centres, as they cannot offer the level of service that

they deem to be the absolute minimum. In many instances, their place is taken by organisations that focus on profit and do not necessarily place human dignity first.

The conditions in the collective reception centres have a negative effect on trafficking survivors. NGOs observe that individuals frequently leave the reception centres at night to engage in prostitution. Due to the lack of supervision, trafficking and re-trafficking may take place, and cases of sexual abuse including rape inside the centres have also been reported.

Asylum seekers also lose their right to accommodation if they are absent from the centre for more than 72 hours – and it is extremely difficult and time-consuming to regain the right to accommodation once revoked by the prefecture. Those who are returned to Italy under the Dublin III Regulation – which includes vulnerable asylum seekers – are likely to have lost the right to all material reception conditions because they were previously accommodated in Italy before moving on to another European country. This is contrary to case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union.[5]

Dublin transfers

Even though the Dublin III Regulation does not explicitly prohibit the transfer of vulnerable asylum seekers, States are bound by human rights law as well as the provisions of the Regulation. Under the terms of the Council of Europe's anti-trafficking Convention, those who have been trafficked should be given a recovery and reflection period of 30 days, during which time they can remain in the territory of the State Party. In light of the provisions of the Dublin III Regulation, this temporary residence might in itself be sufficient grounds for transferring responsibility for assessing these asylum applications to the State that is providing this recovery and reflection period.

After the recovery and reflection period has passed, if the State decides nonetheless that another State is responsible for assessing the claim, it has to inform that State, which must explicitly agree to take responsibility for the individual and also explicitly declare

that they will receive the appropriate care upon being transferred. The State requesting to make a transfer can only do so if neither the transfer itself (because of potential risk of physical or psychological harm) nor the subsequent reception conditions are in contravention of relevant provisions in European law, including – but not limited to – the European Convention on Human Rights and the Council of Europe's Convention.

Other international treaty bodies have also issued decisions regarding the legality of Dublin transfers to Italy. In 2018, the UN Committee against Torture decided in two cases that the transfer of asylum seekers who had been subjected to torture would infringe their rights under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as the provision of adequate health care could not be guaranteed upon their arrival. The Swiss Federal Administrative Tribunal as well as several German courts have also partially recognised the problematic situation in Italy. For example, in a December 2019 judgement the Swiss tribunal ruled that Italian authorities are required to furnish guarantees on an individual case basis concerning reception conditions.

Pre-existing precarious conditions in the Italian reception system have been exacerbated by recent legislative reforms, and the timely identification of victims of trafficking and the facilitation of adequate provision are highly questionable. If explicit, individual guarantees with regard to the proper reception of asylum seekers who have been trafficked are not given (or if there are reasons to doubt that in practice these guarantees cannot be fulfilled), States should refrain from instigating Dublin transfers of these asylum seekers to Italy.

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Trafficking, ritual oaths and criminal investigations

Ana Dols García

The influence of traditional beliefs in the trafficking of Nigerian women for sexual exploitation must be better understood in order to help identify and protect victims and to properly inform judicial processes.

Oaths play a crucial role in Nigerian trafficking networks. By sealing the pact between women who want to migrate to Europe and their traffickers, oaths strengthen the ties between women and their traffickers, their family and the spirit world. Through these vows – known as juju oaths – women promise to pay off the debt, respect the traffickers and not report their traffickers to the police.

Oaths directly ties women with the spirits, from whom retaliation is expected if the agreement is breached. Women are persuaded that terrible things, including illness, death and madness, will befall them and their families if they do not repay their debt. Furthermore, breaking the pact is seen as an act of dishonour that reflects badly upon a woman's family. Women also consider that, having accepted the oath, they

have accepted the situation of exploitation and this serves to reinforce the authority that their madams have over them.

The taking of the oath is performed in symbolic and theatrical ceremonies, usually in shrines to the deity Ayelala, who is known for delivering justice. In the course of these oath-taking ceremonies, women may be asked to remove their clothes, take baths, and drink or eat specific concoctions. Small incisions may be made to their bodies. Items including animal blood, kola nuts, water, palm oil, alcohol or herbs are usually used in addition to fingernails, blood, sweat, menstrual blood or hair, which are generally taken from both the oath-taker and from one of her female relatives. Priests use these corporeal extractions and other symbolic elements such as a woman's underwear to make a small 'packet'. It is believed that whoever has the packet can control the woman. Anecdotal accounts suggest that at times pacts are also being sanctioned in some Pentecostal churches, and that some churches may be involved in trafficking networks, both in Nigeria and in destination countries.

Fear of breaking the pact is so intense that sometimes traffickers may not need to exert other means of control. The result of this is that trafficked Nigerian women appear relatively free from constraints, which in turn hinders their identification as victims by law enforcement actors and renders subsequent police and judicial processes more difficult.

Breaking the oath

To combat the fear that is created in victims, the Nigerian National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) recommends that law enforcement officials and NGOs supporting victims inform the women that any contracts they may have signed are not legal, and assist them to seek spiritual counsel, if requested.[1] It encourages law enforcement actors to call on expert witnesses to emphasise the effects of ritual oaths in a prosecution, and also recommends the intervention of religious advisors to help bring forward a prosecution. In an operation in the Netherlands, for example, at least 10 victims agreed to

collaborate with the authorities following the intervention of a pastor and a woman who had formerly been trafficked. The Dutch attorney general claimed that the moral authority of the religious leader encouraged victims to trust the police and overcame any fears linked to breaking the oaths.

In March 2018, the Oba (traditional ruler) of Benin Kingdom in southern Nigeria performed a ritual to neutralise the oath curses that had already been administered to women and to invoke a curse on any native doctor who administers such oaths. Reportedly, this gave strength to some women to flee their traffickers, although there are no data available about how this revocation might have affected criminal investigations.

In destination countries in Europe, law enforcement actors are adapting their approaches to better protect victims and improve prosecution of traffickers.[2] For instance, in Spain, police officers are receiving specific training to bolster their understanding of these networks and the national police has a group of specialist officers who focus on African trafficking networks. However, despite these and other welcome steps, further progress is needed.

Interviewing potential victims

International anti-trafficking guidelines recommend that interviews with potential victims are conducted by specialist officers. Anecdotal evidence gathered in the course of my research suggests that traditional respect for elders means that women respond more positively to older interviewers. Women may interpret physical discomfort or malaise displayed by the interviewer as a sign of being cursed. Some police officers reported feeling nervous and uncomfortable when women avoided looking at them directly, believing that the women were not listening to them or were lying. However, generally in West African cultures, not looking directly into an interlocutor's eyes is a respectful gesture. Being attentive to non-verbal communication is also essential, as women may change their body language when referring to the oaths, for example choking or gagging when recalling the consumption of concoctions.[3]

Statements have to be collected accurately and thoroughly. Any transcription of a statement that is repetitive, automatic or over-simplified has less value in court. For example, one NGO respondent told how: "a victim explained how they made cuts in her chest, back and sides and how they took a kind of lime with which they rubbed her forehead until blood came out, which she had to drink. However, the police wrote that they had removed her nails and pubic hair to do a juju ritual."

Stereotypes may influence the identification of the victim and the evaluation of protection risks. For example, during an interview with a potential victim from Guinea, the same NGO representative asked the police to inquire about ritual oaths. The police dismissed the suggestion, saying that ritual oaths were only relevant to Nigerians. The interpreter had to explain to the police officer that in Guinea people also believe in the power of juju oaths.

Some interpreters used during interviews may not be aware of crucial concepts like juju oaths; others may themselves also believe in the effects of spiritual powers and be afraid to work in cases involving Nigerian networks.

Cultural mediators – usually survivors of trafficking – can ease engagement with victims and provide women with a concrete example of how it is possible to extricate themselves from exploitative situations. And the accompaniment of victims by specialised NGOs can provide the women with the confidence, security and tools that they need in order to cope better with criminal proceedings.

Collecting physical evidence

When conducting forensic examinations such as obtaining blood or saliva for DNA tests, it is essential to explain to the women the purpose and relevance of the procedures performed, as they may link it to juju rituals.[4] It is also crucial to differentiate between tribal scarifications, cuts made to the body linked to traditional medicine and cuts made in the context of trafficking. In conducting such examinations it is important not to dehumanise the women by placing so much emphasis on their physical features that they are reduced to mere human manifestations of juju threats.[5]

Police may recover the 'packets' created during the oath ritual. These must be collected, preserved and documented correctly, in the greatest possible detail. After documentation police should return these to the victim if they so wish. Some victims report their exploitation situation only once their packet is in the hands of the police. Any personal object belonging to the victim should be removed from their place of exploitation, as victims may fear that it will be used to curse them.

Oaths in court

The particular dynamics of Nigerian networks should be considered in the preparation and development of a trafficking prosecution. The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) recommends that consent-related issues should be addressed early on in the trial in order to provide the court with a framework within which to understand the vulnerability, inconsistencies in testimony and apparent consent of the victims to their exploitation. The presentation of physical evidence, such as remnants of rituals, or telephone conversations alluding to juju threats, gives judges a greater evidence base upon which to adopt a sound verdict.

In at least two cases in the UK, the intervention of experts on sub-Saharan spiritual beliefs was essential both for contextualising the behaviour of the victims and for explaining the cultural aspects linked to the cases.[6] Psychologists are also increasingly providing expert evidence on how oaths become a mechanism of control that intensely influences women's behaviour.

Judicial considerations

There is a mismatch between the importance attributed to the oaths by law enforcement actors and NGOs and how it is reflected in court decisions. Where oaths and juju are mentioned in court decisions it is mainly in the description of the facts, not in the justification of the sentence. There are also many inaccuracies in references to the oaths and spiritual powers.

A common mistake is to underestimate these beliefs as superstitions or to consider them 'backward', or the people who hold such beliefs credulous. Comments like these serve to discredit these beliefs without adding any value to the judicial reasoning. There is also a lack of knowledge of the prevalence of religious syncretism in sub-Saharan societies, and some judges assert that a woman who declares herself Christian cannot feel coerced by ritual oaths. Tribunals have also assumed that victims with a certain level of education cannot believe in the power of the oaths. Furthermore, courts ignore the fact that such ceremonies may create a situation of fear or psychological distress, even in those with weaker or no faith.

Frequently, there is a lack of understanding of the role played by oaths in trafficking networks. Some judges claim that the traffickers' objective is that women never repay their debt. However, the effectiveness of ritual oaths is based on the fact that it is feasible for the debt to be paid – by repaying what they owe, women can avoid the dire consequences. In this way the ritual oaths are very effective at binding the women to their traffickers. Traffickers instrumentalise the oath to reinforce feelings of submission, secrecy and loyalty, seeking to prevent the victim breaking away from them for as long as possible. More evidence is needed to develop comprehensive, empirically based best practices to better equip those who work to combat trafficking.

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Civil litigation on behalf of trafficking survivors: a new approach to accountability?

Henry Wu

Criminal prosecutions of trafficking offences are limited in scope. Civil litigation may provide an avenue for justice and accountability within a victim-centred, trauma-informed framework.

Compared with the estimated number of trafficked persons, the number of criminal prosecutions of trafficking offences is exceedingly low. Globally, there were just over 11,000 prosecutions in 2018, of which just 4% related to labour trafficking.[1] Despite a well-ratified legal framework relating to trafficking, the criminal justice approach in many parts of the world has not been equal to the dual task of preventing trafficking and protecting victims. When criminal prosecution is not an option, civil lawsuits can uphold the rights of victims and hold traffickers accountable. Rather than being merely a substitute for criminal prosecution, strategic civil litigation on behalf of survivors is a radically different approach.

Structural differences between civil and criminal action

Civil litigation allows trafficked persons to recover compensatory damages for loss,

injury or harm suffered. In some jurisdictions, courts may also award punitive damages to hold traffickers financially accountable and deter similar acts. The most important difference between civil and criminal cases, however, is that justice in the civil context is survivor-led. Civil action proceeds within a framework that is more responsive than the criminal prosecution framework to the goals and interests of trafficking survivors. The primary goal of trafficking prosecution is often to obtain convictions accompanied by lengthy prison terms but the process by which prosecutors obtain convictions may come at a cost to victims. For example, authorities have temporarily detained trafficked persons in order to compel them to testify.[2] Survivors may have various reasons for not cooperating with authorities but even when they are willing to testify appearing in court may be a stressful and traumatic ordeal. And it is not always the case that retributive justice outcomes like lengthy prison terms align with what survivors understand as 'justice'. Survivors, who may themselves face criminalisation or deportation due to involvement in sex work or having irregular migration status, may not view the criminal justice system as aligned with their interests. For example, survivors may seek substantive outcomes – such as stable housing and employment – that are not achieved through criminal prosecution because remedial measures like restitution are often not ordered in the criminal context.[3] Finally, because civil cases often require a lower standard of proof, trafficked persons may be more likely to be successful in a civil proceeding.

A trauma-informed and victim-centred approach

Labour trafficking survivor Kendra Ross filed a civil case in the US District Court for the District of Kansas, alleging that her trafficker, a leader of a nationwide cult, forced her to work more than 40,000 uncompensated hours, starting when she was just 12 years old.[4] Ross was awarded more than US$8 million in restitution and damages, the largest single victim judgement in a US civil trafficking case. It is important

to note, however, that large sums are not an indication that a survivor has actually received any financial compensation. Traffickers often have hidden or inaccessible assets, making it very difficult to collect the monies that are due from the convicted trafficker. And focusing on monetary judgements can belittle the lengthy process of litigation and the courage exhibited by survivors.

This case also shows how civil cases can be part of a trauma-informed, victim-centred approach. Betsy Hutson, an attorney who led the pro bono team representing Ross, has described a gradual process of building trust.[5] Because of her past trauma, Ross was reticent in initial meetings. Her attorneys did not start drafting her complaint until six months after meeting her, and her case was not filed until a year and a half after the first meeting. As the case proceeded, Hutson facilitated a trauma-informed approach by asking open-ended questions, creating a space for empathy and continually checking in with Ross about her goals and needs. The fact that a civil case proceeds only when a survivor is ready to pursue it is a crucial feature that is unique to the civil context. And because a trafficking survivor has an active role in the case, the very process of seeking civil damages is a recognition of their autonomy, and can support their evolving needs and their journey to recovery.

Civil litigation in an international context

Although the vast majority of civil trafficking cases have been filed in US courts, there have also been cases in a number of other countries including Australia, Uganda, Belgium and Israel.[6] In contrast to criminal cases, civil cases mostly involve labour rather than sexual exploitation. Civil litigation is well-suited to labour trafficking cases for a number of reasons. First, criminal statutes are often limited with regards to labour trafficking and it may therefore be difficult for prosecutors to bring labour trafficking cases through criminal prosecution. In the civil context, attorneys may use a wide variety of existing, alternative legal frameworks, such as tort law or labour law. Second, courts may be unwilling to view certain instances of labour exploitation as

applicable under labour trafficking or modern slavery statutes. In the civil context, courts may be more familiar with traditional causes of action like claims relating to breach of contract.

Civil litigation can also be an especially promising approach when traffickers subvert the proper administration of justice. For example, a civil case was filed in the High Court of Uganda in 2012 in which the plaintiff, a Lebanese national, had initially been recruited to work as a manager. Instead, defendants confiscated his passport and forced him to work without pay in cruel and inhumane conditions. When the plaintiff sought help from local authorities, the defendants used various security services to harass him.[7] Despite contacting the Uganda Human Rights Commission and a variety of government agencies, the plaintiff was unable to hold his traffickers accountable. In 2015, the court ruled in favour of the plaintiff in his civil suit and awarded him additional punitive damages for the stated purpose of deterring exploitative labour recruitment and labour exploitation.

A model for increasing access to justice
The Human Trafficking Legal Center (HTLC), a non-profit organisation based in the US, serves as a useful model of how to advance civil litigation on behalf of trafficking survivors.[8] The HTLC has trained thousands of attorneys at international law firms. Most importantly, the HTLC serves as a bridge organisation – one that connects trafficking survivors to highly skilled attorneys in the private sector. The HTLC receives referrals from local NGO partners and other direct assistance organisations. HTLC attorneys may first interview survivors to determine if the case is eligible and the HTLC then refers survivors to private attorneys who take on cases on a pro bono basis. Attorneys from the HTLC provide technical assistance and may also serve as co-counsel.

This structure has several advantages. First, civil cases can take up to several years, depending on the nature of the case. As a result, litigating a civil case to completion can be incredibly costly. By engaging private attorneys working on a pro bono basis, the

HTLC ensures high-quality representation at no cost to survivors. Depending on the country, attorneys in private practice may be required to provide a minimum number of hours of pro bono service – a professional obligation that can be fulfilled through this kind of representation. This structure also means the HTLC can facilitate civil trafficking cases while keeping its overheads low, and can operate with a small permanent staff. The HTLC also provides attorneys with access to its database of over 400 civil cases filed in US federal courts.

Certain key aspects of the HTLC model highlight steps that could be replicated elsewhere to increase access to civil litigation for trafficking survivors:

- support for bridge organisations, which play an intermediary role between direct service providers and lawyers
- training for attorneys from the private bar, meaning impact can be scaled without requiring considerable additional funding
- facilitation of access to information resources, such as a global database of civil trafficking cases filings, as a first step in increasing the practical knowledge required to litigate these civil cases.

The replicability of the model depends on the involvement of a number of civil society stakeholders. This includes effective collaboration with NGOs and anti-trafficking organisations, which creates a steady flow of cases; the engagement of human rights lawyers and civil litigators in their willingness to represent survivors; and the support of donors for bridge organisations like the HTLC and for establishing similar organisations around the world. There are, however, practical and legislative challenges for expanding civil litigation efforts. In other countries there may not be an established culture of pro bono service by private attorneys such as exists in the US, and other countries' laws may not permit victims to sue their traffickers for damages.

Finally, civil litigation is not without risks. Improperly trained attorneys may subject a survivor to additional trauma through the detailed fact-finding process that is involved in civil litigation. Alternative

fee arrangements, including contingency fee arrangements where lawyers receive a percentage of the final amount paid to the client, may be exploitatively costly. Finally, testifying in a civil context may be stressful for survivors. However, these disadvantages are not necessarily unique to civil cases, and may be more severe in the criminal context. Despite these risks, civil litigation deserves a place within a comprehensive, global anti-trafficking strategy.

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Challenging the so-called trafficking–terror finance nexus

Craig Damian Smith

The assertion of a causal relationship between trafficking and terror financing is called into question by poor evidence and weak data, and its troubling policy implications.

Since 2015, progressively bolder assertions about the connections between trafficking and terrorism have been made in a series of UN Security Council (UNSC) instruments. Most significantly, Resolution 2388 of 2017 asserted that trafficking is a major contributor to terror financing.[1] And in 2019 the UNSC's Counter-Terror Executive Directorate (CTED) published a report that claimed to provide evidence for a genuine nexus between "human trafficking, terrorism, and terror finance".[2]

Claims about the nexus developed in the context of the rise of the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria and Iraq, and EU and EU Member States' renewed efforts to contain irregular migration after the 2015 refugee 'crisis'. France initiated discussions around Resolution 2388 in response to media reports about sub-Saharan African migrants being sold at slave auctions in Libya and reports of IS affiliates profiting from trafficking operations there. These news stories seemed to offer evidence that was used to substantiate European claims that irregular migration was being driven by transnational trafficking networks rather than by complex migration dynamics.

The UNSC cites Libya as part of a global trend of terror groups profiting from human trafficking, alongside enslavement and trafficking by IS in Iraq, Syria and Turkey; human smuggling by Al-Qaeda affiliates in the Sahel; kidnapping, forced marriage and forced recruitment by Boko Haram in Nigeria; ransoming by Al-Shabaab in the Horn of Africa; and the forced recruitment of child soldiers by the Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa. Although these cases are undoubtedly troubling, basic social science research methodology casts doubt on their comparability and on the necessary causal relationships implied by the term 'nexus'. Moreover, the term 'nexus' is often employed rhetorically in order to push for productive pairings between two seemingly disparate policy fields.[3] There is reason for concern about the UNSC's policy agenda since it affirmed the existence of a trafficking–terror finance nexus, then commissioned research to provide evidence for it.

I make this claim based on the chronology of resolutions and because I was a consultant to the CTED report. I delivered four main findings. First, the cases were idiosyncratic and did not provide evidence of a nexus. Second, weak data on trafficking and terror financing in general make it impossible to estimate the proportion of funding which terror groups derive from trafficking, although it is likely to be insignificant in comparison with other sources.[4] Third, terror groups exploit irregular migration routes that traverse their territory and rarely orchestrate international trafficking. Fourth, addressing trafficking with anti-terror tactics would potentially lead to more militarised policy agendas and ignore best practice relating to victim-centred approaches, the alleviation of root causes, and ensuring safe and legal migration channels. While the CTED report included some of these caveats, the evidence it presents does not support its claim of a clear nexus between trafficking and terror financing.

The purpose of this article is to persuade policymakers and researchers to approach the purported 'trafficking–terror finance nexus' with scepticism and to avoid disseminating such claims without more detailed research and reliable data. My findings are based on desk research and interviews with expert respondents from international organisations at headquarters and regional offices, think tanks, and international law enforcement in the US, Turkey, Egypt, Nigeria and Europe.[5]

Weak and uncomparable data

The main impediment to claiming the existence of a nexus between trafficking and terror finance is the absence of strong, comparable data from which to make observations about causal relationships between variables. First, the paucity of data on trafficking is evident when examining the relevant annual studies. For example, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Report on Trafficking in Persons is limited to State-level prosecution statistics. The nature and reliability of these statistics vary widely, tell us little about overall trafficking rates,

A 17-year-old Eritrean refugee puts his handprint on a UNHCR #EndHumanTrafficking banner at Shagarab refugee camp, Sudan. Members of the refugee and host community came together to demonstrate solidarity against human trafficking in eastern Sudan.

and cannot be extrapolated to form global trafficking statistics. The International Labour Organization's Global Estimates of Modern Slavery reports focus on forced labour and forced marriage, take pains to highlight data limitations, and caution against extrapolation to global statistics. The US State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports are perhaps the most influential, ranking States by compliance with international law and efforts to combat trafficking. Although TIP used to incorporate estimated trafficking rates, this was abandoned following criticism from the US Government Accountability Office about unverifiable data.[6]

While discussions around the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration placed a renewed focus on UN Sustainable Development Goal 16.2's call for more robust monitoring tools being reached through common indicators, it was also recognised that fundamental barriers exist to comparative research on trafficking, particularly around disparities in legal regimes, terminology and case identification methods. Furthermore, traffickers (and often survivors of trafficking) have strong incentives to behave in ways that frustrate data collection.

The Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index (GSI), which has gained influence by framing trafficking as a form of 'modern slavery' (and is widely cited,

including by CTED), purports to offer country-level and global metrics, but relies on shaky estimation strategies derived from a range of activities which do not have a cross-border element – the factor that is largely used by law enforcement and international organisations to detect cases and estimate and collate data. Experts interviewed during my research made rather pointed criticisms about its reliability.[7] They argued that despite anticipated scepticism among scholars over the statistics' rigour, there is widespread acceptance of the estimates at UN level, partly because of intense lobbying by the Walk Free Foundation and partly because the GSI appears to provide a solution to complex estimation problems.

The next step in identifying a causal nexus would be to estimate the scale of trafficking-related earnings made by terror groups. Here again we run into major issues. There is no doubt strong evidence that terror groups rely on criminal activity for financing. However, personnel from UNODC and from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe relayed how terror financing figures are often based on classified intelligence from agencies who have a vested interest in over-emphasising the issue. Assessments are not made available for independent review, and instead researchers often simply cite official statistics. Likewise, respondents argued that there is a good deal of misunderstanding among policymakers around the connections between transnational criminality and terrorism, noting a trend of conflating geographical overlap with operational convergence.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) – an inter-governmental watchdog organisation – has emphasised the difficulties with tracing proceeds from irregular migration in general.[8] While they were familiar with the cases cited in the UNSC instruments, UNODC respondents I interviewed were adamant they knew of no statistics (classified or otherwise) to support the claim that groups like Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram or IS earned a significant portion of their profits from trafficking. Since smuggling and trafficking are more often localised, there

might very well be limited transnational activity to measure in the first place.

Opportunism, oppression and recruitment

Trafficking carried out by IS is the most obvious case of terrorists trafficking for profit. Most notoriously, IS enslaved thousands of Yazidi women and girls in Iraq who were given as spoils of war, subjected to systematic rape, sold locally or trafficked to Syria and Turkey. At its peak, this involved complicated logistics organised by a dedicated IS committee but, organisational sophistication aside, the FATF acknowledges that "it is difficult to envisage human trafficking as a lucrative source of revenue" for the group when weighed against other sources like oil, antiquities, ransom money and taxing local populations.[9]

Evidence suggests that terror groups more often use trafficking and allied crimes for operational and ideological purposes rather than financing. Groups use slavery and forced marriage to recruit, retain and reward members, or to terrorise local populations, and routinely engage in forced recruitment of combatants and child soldiers. Most of these practices, however, do not amount to international trafficking. UNSC Resolutions therefore bundle long-standing crimes and human rights abuses with the new focus on Syria, Iraq and Libya. As one respondent who worked in the Obama administration observed, "The Security Council seems to be conflating trafficking with types of exploitation we've been combatting for a couple of decades." More broadly, whereas traffickers seek to remain clandestine, terrorists court political attention, which is unconducive to the bribery, collusion and corruption necessary to move people across borders. For example, in the Libyan coastal town of Sabratha, smugglers bankrolled the fight against IS because the presence of the group was jeopardising their revenues.

Armed groups have long operated along irregular migration routes. Before General Qaddafi was toppled in 2011, smuggling and trafficking in Libya were controlled by the regime and its allied forces. Migrants are now vulnerable to trafficking in areas controlled

by the Government of National Accord and by militants alike, but now face greater barriers to leaving Libya given migration deals with EU Member States. Indeed, entities funded by the international community (namely the Libyan Special Deterrent Forces, its coastguard, and Directorate for Countering Illegal Migration) have basically assumed control of the routes and now routinely engage in trafficking – and to a greater degree than did militants after the fall of Qaddafi.

Avoiding unproductive policy pairings

A final question is whether the reference to a trafficking–terror finance nexus offers a productive policy pairing – as was the case with the migration–development nexus. With the exception of one Nigerian security official, each of my respondents cautioned against using the kinds of militarised tactics associated with counter-terrorism policy. Several worried that treating trafficking as a hard security issue risked creating unintended, adverse results for international security and trafficking victims alike.

Military operations often destabilise States and regions, foster resentment and extremism, and act as a catalyst for displacement. They also create markets for trafficking. For example, the Kosovo Liberation Army and other armed groups in the former Yugoslavia trafficked women and girls to meet demand among NATO and UN forces. The same dynamics occur around international peacekeeping and humanitarian operations more broadly, which are often geared towards supressing extremism.

There is ample evidence that securitised migration policies are detrimental to international protection norms, the rights of migrants, and State security. The pairing of trafficking with terror allows autocratic and authoritarian regimes to leverage Western preoccupation with Islamism and irregular migration in order to procure military aid and to consolidate domestic political control. As one senior post-conflict specialist asked: "What does it tell you when an authoritarian government confirms to the Security Council that yes, indeed, the threat du jour is a big problem in their territory? [It means] they

want more funding for security services […] and best of all they want it off the books."

Finally, deploying anti-terror policies in the fight against trafficking would ignore best practices advocated by scholars, practitioners and rights organisations, particularly around livelihoods, education and development provision, and around victim-centred legal regimes. Access to safe and legal migration channels could also alleviate vulnerability to trafficking on irregular migration routes. Unfortunately, the UNSC members who developed Resolution 2388 are increasingly reliant on cooperation with autocratic or authoritarian States as part of migration control agendas – which foster vulnerability to trafficking in the first place.

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1. For a full list of resolutions and associated statements see http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2388

2. CTED (2019) *Identifying and Exploring the Nexus Between Human Trafficking, Terrorism, and Terror Financing* bit.ly/CTED-trafficking-terrorism-2019

3. The term 'nexus' implies a set of necessary causal relationships between two or more phenomena. To take a prominent example, the migration–development nexus describes a series of mutually reinforcing and complex causal relationships between different forms of development and (im)mobility.

4. Another issue with the purported nexus is the wide divergence in identifying terror groups. The EU lists 21 entities as terror organisations; the US State Department identifies 67 terrorist organisations; and the UN designates 82 entities as targets of sanctions for terror and terror-financing activities. The differences are the result of a rather broad divergence in designation criteria, interest groups, and political agendas.

5. Respondents drawn from international organisations including UNODC, the International Organization for Migration, the UN, UNHCR and OSCE.

6. UNODC *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/glotip.html; ILO *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage* bit.ly/ILO-Estimates-Slavery-2017; US Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report* www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/

7. See also Gallagher A T (2017) 'What's Wrong with the Global Slavery Index?', *Anti-Trafficking Review* 8: 90–112 https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121786

8. Financial Action Task Force (2018) 'Financial Flows from Human Trafficking' bit.ly/FATF-finance-trafficking-2018

9. Financial Action Task Force (2015) 'Financing of the Terrorist Organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)', p13 bit.ly/FATF-finance-ISIL-2015

Tackling exploitation through 'technology for freedom'

Christa Foster Crawford and Ashley Kafton

Examples from Southeast Asia show both the promise and the pitfalls of emerging technologies and platforms that are being used to tackle forms of exploitation.

Factors that make migrants vulnerable to exploitation – while on the move or at their place of destination – include displacement and insecurity, lack of legal status, insufficient awareness of rights and potential risks, and inability to understand the language or how to access help. In Southeast Asia, two of the forms of exploitation to which migrants are vulnerable are online child sexual exploitation and forced labour.

Online child sexual exploitation involves the making of sexually explicit images or videos of children under the age of 18. Unlike in-person exploitation, the harm continues so long as the images exist. Although physical movement is not a prerequisite for a crime of this nature to be defined as trafficking, some children have been moved to places where the online exploitation takes place, including to major hubs in the Philippines and Thailand. Others are vulnerable to such exploitation because they are already on the move.

Another form of exploitation takes place in the fishing industry, when people who are fleeing harm or lack of economic opportunity in their home country are lured into forced labour. Job brokers who offer hope instead trap people on boats where they can be out at sea for months or years at a time, working in inhumane conditions for long hours with little or no pay. Those who try to escape are punished and sometimes killed.

Technology companies, NGOs and governments are harnessing the power of technology to prevent and prosecute these and other forms of harm. However, although these emerging technologies promise freedom for many, in the wrong hands they can also be used to facilitate exploitation.

Technology for prevention

One of the most effective ways of preventing exploitation is to reduce demand for products which involve labour exploitation. When forced labour is no longer hidden in the supply chain, companies are incentivised to ensure that the entire production process is free of exploitation. Blockchain, which creates an immutable record of transactions, helps to promote greater transparency and accountability. It can be used, for instance, to track a product through the entire production process to verify that it was not made using forced labour, or to document labour contracts and wage payments.[1] However, technology cannot guarantee exploitation-free products, and may therefore give consumers what may be a false sense of security and shield producers from scrutiny.

First, supply chain accountability may not cover all inputs. For instance, there is current political will to address exploitation at sea (in the fishing industry) but exploitation in the sorting and packing process continues unchecked. Second, the reality is that the complex, inter-related global supply chain means that most end products will contain some inputs which have involved exploitation. Developers must ensure that technology accurately tracks constituent inputs and fungible goods, and governments and industry must ensure that accountability is built into all stages of the production process.

Prevention efforts must also address the supply side. Chatbots like Facebook's Miss Migration,[2] and apps that can be accessed through mobile phones and devices as well as through online platforms, help prevent harm by educating migrants about their rights and providing resources for safer migration, access to ethical job brokers, and warnings about unscrupulous job brokers and transportation agents. Such tools also generate data about the users and so inform an evidence-based understanding of the problem and effective responses. However, the high cost of devices, lack of access to the internet (due to limitations on infrastructure

and freedom) and lack of resources in local languages are common barriers to information being shared widely and effectively. QR codes and radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags, which can transmit data without the use of mobile devices or computers, are one response to this, although they still require data readers, which are not available in every community. And cultural relevance and issues of literacy, numeracy and other potential barriers must also be taken into account when developing and presenting such information.

Prevention must be focused at the community level, including through economic empowerment. People in poor communities are more vulnerable to exploitation, which is often compounded by crisis migration. Technology can be used to indirectly mitigate risk, in part by creating new economic opportunities. For example, many communities that are at risk of trafficking lack access to banks or other traditional means of finance, making them vulnerable to predatory lenders or even unable to receive non-cash payments. The primary barrier is their lack of documentation to confirm their identity, finances or credit-worthiness. By providing an online identity, blockchain makes possible access to bank accounts, the ability to receive verified wage payments, and even access to credit. This in turn reduces their vulnerability to trafficking, especially in the context of crises such as fires or floods that may force them to move if they are unable to rebuild.

Technology can also be used to raise awareness of rights abuses. For instance, Rohingya people in Myanmar have faced internal displacement and exploitation in the international fishing industry for decades. Now monitoring groups can use drone and satellite imagery as well as geodata and data visualisations in order to document the destruction of villages in real time, with the goal of ending rights abuses through raising awareness. However, the same technology can equally be used by governments and individuals to commit abuses. Technology designers, in collaboration with governments, NGOs and the international community, must decide how to mitigate the potential damage the use of such technology can bring.

Technology for protection

Emerging technologies help law enforcement to identify and assist victims, whether they are online, out at sea, or elsewhere. For instance, not only does artificial intelligence permit law enforcement to locate and remove from circulation some of the hundreds of millions of exploitative images of children, but facial recognition software, metadata embedded in images and geolocation technology also enable them to identify and assist victims, regardless of their remote locations. Mobile apps and RFID tags help ensure that vulnerable migrants can be found at sea even if they lack documentation, making them even harder to trace, or are hidden through corrupt practices such as ships sailing under 'false flags'. In fact, geolocation records can be combined with blockchain to document how often workers are allowed off fishing vessels and then to alert law enforcement and NGOs to potential cases of labour exploitation and slave-like conditions. Furthermore, a digital identity can be created using blockchain technology and optional biometric identifiers to provide independent identity documents as an alternative to government-issued documentation. Digital identities help to protect against exploitation, including by enabling individuals to prove their eligibility for services, and by providing information about where they live if they do not know how to find their way home. However, the same technology can also give traffickers and unethical employers efficient unbreakable ways of tagging and tracking individuals in order to monitor and control them. This is particularly the case when biometric data are involved.

Also essential to protection is having the awareness of and ability to enjoy one's legal and human rights. Apps, QR codes and other tools can inform migrants about their labour and migration rights and where to get help if needed.[3] Blockchain and e-payment services[4] can help ensure that migrants are paid fair and legal wages, providing transparency and accountability, preventing employers from illegally withholding payment, and making it safer and easier to send home remittances. And other apps

and services make it easier to document and monitor working conditions and employment terms, empowering the worker.[5]

However, such technological tools are only as good as the information they use and the extent to which they are accessible. As with tools focused on prevention, there are real accessibility concerns, which are compounded by the very real risk that the exploiter will confiscate the technology, or even use it to track and control those whom they exploit.

Technology for prosecution

Finally, technology is being used both to identify and locate perpetrators, and to provide evidence for criminal prosecution and other forms of enforcement. Just as they can be used to identify victims of online child sexual exploitation, the metadata, geolocation data and other unique identifiers embedded in exploitative images can reveal the identity and location of perpetrators, leading to their arrest and prosecution. Once convicted, technological restrictions (preventing computer use or blocking certain kinds of content) can help prevent future harm. However, the trend within the technology sector is towards greater privacy, anonymity and encryption which, although core rights and values that should be protected, make it harder to identify perpetrators and hold them accountable.

Similarly, blockchain technology gives banks and financial institutions an immutable record of transactions, providing clear evidence against traffickers with large-scale operations, who need to make use of the international banking system to profit from their crimes. Governments can use that evidence to hold perpetrators financially and criminally liable, and industries, investors and other stakeholders can more easily recognise exploitative transactions and create a culture of freedom.[6] However, the issues around privacy that arise with perpetrator identification also apply to digital evidence. Furthermore, the vast number of lower-level perpetrators who do not operate through formal banking systems may escape this type of detection.

The answer to these pitfalls is not to hinder the role of technology, for it will continue to advance, with those advances often led by exploiters. Instead, the power of technology must be harnessed for the greatest good and must mitigate the most avoidable harms. In doing so, several key principles should be considered.[7] The first is to scale better, not just bigger. Increased anonymity, privacy and encryption are essential elements of technology for freedom, but developers and policymakers must take into account how they can be used for harm. The second principle is to focus on people. While tracking the identity and location of products has few ethical implications, there are many implications for human rights, dignity and safety in tracking the identity and location of human beings, especially when this involves biometric data. Finally, technology must be informed by communities. Communities should be asked what they need and solutions should be designed to meet those needs and to adapt in the face of rapidly evolving forms of harm.

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1. The Mekong Club (2018) 'Using Blockchain to Combat Modern Slavery' bit.ly/MekongClub-blockchain-2018

2. www.facebook.com/MissMigration

3. For example, in Thailand apps are being developed by a number of partnerships between technology companies, NGOs and governments, relating to rights and resources in the fishing industry (for three examples, see www.MASThuman.org, the Apprise pilot study being conducted by the UNU Institute in Macau, and work by Winrock International) and to rights and resources during detention (see the Association for the Prevention of Torture and the Payap Center for Human Rights Law).

4. For example, SaverAsia www.saverasia.com

5. For example, the eMin project bit.ly/Diginex-Verifik8-eMin

6. For example, Liberty Shared Operational Research and Analysis Programme https://libertyshared.org/operational-research

7. These recommendations and the framework for this article were first included in Crawford C F (2019) 'Sex and Shrimp: Blockchain Use Cases for Ending Child Sex Trafficking and Modern Slavery' presented at the Blockchain for Social Impact Conference 2019, New York City, 10 June 2019.

Smuggling and trafficking from Vietnam to Europe

Mimi Vu and Nadia Sebtaoui

Vietnamese migration to Europe is a complex, fluid phenomenon where a course of action that begins as smuggling can also involve trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

Vietnam is one of the top source countries for those who are smuggled and trafficked into Europe. The majority are young men and boys from a handful of central-north and northern provinces who undertake the long and dangerous journey primarily because they believe they have better economic prospects overseas. Despite steady growth in Vietnam's economy, access to opportunities for upward mobility through education or employment is unequal and mostly concentrated in urban areas. Vietnamese who lack this access and who come from provinces with a long history of seeking work overseas make up the bulk of migrants to Europe.

In the 1980s, Vietnam had labour export and study abroad programmes with former Soviet-bloc countries, which led to the establishment of diaspora communities in Moscow, Kiev, Warsaw, Prague and Berlin. These trade and migration routes still exist today, and Vietnam is now the ninth highest remittance-receiving country in the world. Services facilitating migration continued after the Cold War, but these are now operated by people-smuggling operations controlled by Vietnamese-led organised crime groups in Vietnam and overseas.

Currently, recruitment is through word of mouth and social media and messaging channels such as Facebook and Zalo. Following the tragedy in October 2019 in which 39 Vietnamese were found dead in a refrigerated lorry in Essex (in the south-east of the UK), smugglers now charge US$50,000 or more and claim to guarantee safe passage to the UK plus employment. Families borrow at least half of the total amount to pay for the first stage from Vietnam to a European country.

If a Vietnamese person decides to borrow money and undertake the journey to Europe, they assume an enormous financial and psychological burden. Smugglers and criminal gangs use the indebtedness as leverage to control the migrant throughout the journey, often forcing them into exploitative situations en route such as working in sweatshops or selling counterfeit drugs. Women and children in particular are vulnerable to rape and forced prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation in transit countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France.

First responders in Europe, including law enforcement officials and NGOs, face many challenges in identifying and supporting potential Vietnamese victims of trafficking. These include: insufficient Vietnamese-speaking law enforcement officials and social workers; a lack of knowledge of Vietnamese cultural context, which makes it difficult, when conducting interviews, to make accurate age assessments and reassure migrants of their safety; and a limited number of official translators who have knowledge of the trafficking and smuggling situation. First responders and authorities also often only know about activities within their own borders, and a lack of coordinated law enforcement response allows Vietnamese-led organised criminal groups to operate both under the radar and in plain sight. Finally, a lack of communication and coordination between countries and their analogous agencies prevents the tracking of migrants as they cross borders.

Building trust as first responders

In 2018, nearly 50% of all unaccompanied minors arriving at Paris-Roissy airport (part of a fairly new smuggling route transiting through Haiti) were Vietnamese nationals. The French Red Cross, acting as ad hoc administrators for unaccompanied minors detained at the French border, asked our team to provide interpretation

and social/cultural support for two young Vietnamese people, one male and one female, who had been identified as potential victims of trafficking. They had been granted temporary leave to remain in France, released into child protection services, and provided with housing while awaiting a ruling on their official status.

We arrived at the migrants' hotel very early, knowing that there was a strong possibility that they would flee. During the six hours we spent together we explained their legal situation and the advantages of staying in France, and forged as many personal connections as possible so they would begin to trust us.

There were clear indicators that the initial stories given by the young adults, Mai and Tuan,[1] were rehearsed and untrue. Mai stated that she was an orphan from Quang Tri Province – although her accent indicated otherwise – who had been kidnapped when she was 10 years old and brought to China, where she endured slave labour for several years. She claimed that one day she met a Chinese man (whose name she had never asked) who offered to pay for her journey to Europe and helped her escape. This story is one that smugglers frequently tell migrants to give to authorities when asked. In reality, criminal gangs rarely take on non-paying orphans. We had to be sensitive with Mai, however, as the reasons for giving her false story could also have been due to abuse or sexual exploitation en route.

The first step in building trust was to show empathy, offering food and drinks, and explaining that we were only volunteers who wanted to help. We discussed lighthearted topics such as their favourite Vietnamese food and football player, and joked about Mai's

Nadia Sebtaoui

A mirror reflects Vietnamese migrants in 'Vietnam City', France, often the last transit point for Vietnamese migrants before they enter the UK hidden in lorries.

nails and how important it was for every Vietnamese woman to find a good nail salon. We used the appropriate terms to address each other – 'big sister' (*chị*) and 'little sister/brother' (*em*) – and used the Vietnamese zodiac to inquire about their ages, as it is customary for Vietnamese to respond with their animal sign rather than a number.

Mai and Tuan slowly began to trust us and eventually felt comfortable enough to reveal more of their true stories. Mai was just over 18, scared of travelling by herself, and missed her family very much. She had embarked on this journey after her father had been deported from Europe a few months earlier, and now it was her duty to repay the debts and provide for her family. Mai had no idea how much her debt was. She had taken the 'VIP' route that used air transport to reach France but would have to wait until her final destination – the UK – before the smugglers would tell her how much she owed them. This was likely to be around €50,000, and the burden of repaying it and supporting her family were enormous weights that motivated her subsequent actions.

Tuan's father had died, leaving the family in debt. Tuan was studying law and politics at university, but his aunt and uncle encouraged him to drop out and go to the UK to earn money to support the entire family, including his mother and disabled sister. Like Mai, Tuan would not know how much his journey cost until he reached the UK. His aunt and uncle would borrow funds from elsewhere to pay the sum and Tuan would then be responsible for earning the money to repay his aunt and uncle's debt.

Less than two hours after we left the hotel, social services notified us that Mai

and Tuan had jumped into a passing car that we assume was part of the smuggling network. We learned several valuable lessons from this experience. As first responders, we were unable to adequately explain and offer reassurance to Mai and Tuan of their rights to protection as vulnerable persons in Europe, especially in light of their risk of being trafficked at a later stage of their journey. We should also have asked social services to remove their mobile phones to prevent communication with the smugglers. Lastly, we needed more time to build trust with them and to speak openly and constructively about how they could repay their debt so that they would feel able to decide to stay in France.

Recommendations

European authorities and NGOs should adopt the following recommendations to improve their overall responses in identifying and protecting migrants and potential victims of trafficking or exploitation:

- collect comprehensive data about victims of trafficking across Europe

- adopt a multi-country and multi-agency approach towards Vietnamese organised crime and increase information sharing and networking between State bodies, law enforcement agencies and NGOs

- focus on the blurred lines between trafficking and smuggling to design a more effective response

- recruit and train social workers and law enforcement officials from Vietnamese diaspora communities

- provide mandatory, additional specialised training for translators, NGO representatives, social workers and law enforcement officials who are in contact with potential victims. This should include how to provide information that is specific to the Vietnamese context and how to conduct culturally sensitive interviews, and briefing on the specific control mechanisms used by traffickers and smugglers

- engage private sector actors to deploy prevention programmes in Vietnam that address economic push factors

Prevention and awareness-raising campaigns

There is a need for awareness-raising campaigns in Europe and Vietnam which depict the reality of working in Europe and make clear the increased risks of exploitation and trafficking that accompany the accumulation of considerable debt. All prevention programmes must take place prior to debt being incurred since repayment begins once money has changed hands in Vietnam, not after the migrant embarks on his or her journey. These programmes should be multi-pronged, involve multiple stakeholders and address root causes. They must combine awareness-raising activities with provision of opportunities for advancement such as scholarships to secondary or vocational schools and employment programmes.

Prevention messages must also be tailored to cultural and linguistic characteristics specific to the provinces from which the majority of migrants come. Such programmes are generally well received when they are delivered by local community leaders such as the Women's Union or by influential role models.

One example of a successful prevention programme was developed through a partnership between a Vietnam-based anti-trafficking NGO, the UK and Vietnamese governments and the private sector. The campaign used public service announcements, delivered via traditional and social media channels, featuring star players from Vietnam's national football team. Football is the most popular sport in Vietnam, and national team players are considered heroes and role models. The announcements were also used to introduce viewers to the NGO's existing vocational school scholarship and job placement programme, providing an alternate path to a better future in Vietnam.

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1. Names have been changed to protect their identities.

Migrant 'caravans' in Mexico and the fight against smuggling

Eduardo Torre Cantalapiedra

The treatment of the migrant and asylum seeker caravans travelling through Mexico shows the negative consequences that the fight against people smuggling has had for those making these journeys and their defenders.

Several migrant and asylum seeker 'caravans' have arrived in Mexico since the end of 2018. These gatherings of groups of people travelling together are largely made up of people from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala who are aiming to reach the US. Different caravans have met with different fates on arrival in Mexico. Those arriving at the end of 2018 faced Mexican authorities who were initially reluctant to allow their free transit through the country, although did finally do so. Those arriving at the beginning of 2019 were given temporary documentation that allowed them to remain in the country or to move freely through it for a period of one year. However, subsequent caravans – including the one that originated in the southern Mexican city of Tapachula in October 2019 and the one that left Honduras in January 2020 – have been resolutely suppressed.

The way these caravans have been managed by the Mexican government raises key questions about the reasons for their formation and for State responses to them. Although this new form of mobility is largely an alternative to crossing borders and territories via the use of smugglers (known in Mexico as *coyotes*), the Mexican government maintained that among the caravan organisers were people smugglers whose activities presented a serious danger to individuals in the caravan. In Mexico, people smuggling carries a potential prison sentence of between eight and sixteen years, plus substantial fines. By linking the arrival of these caravans with the war that it is waging on people smuggling, the government sought to legitimise its control and containment of the caravans, while at the same time criminalising this type of mobility, those

who participated, and those activists who supported and accompanied the caravans.

Criminalising caravans and defenders

Throughout the first half of 2019, leading government representatives made several statements in which they implied that the caravans had been organised at least in part by people smugglers. These included a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit announcing that the bank accounts of several people had been frozen because of transactions that suggested they were involved in people smuggling operations; in a poorly founded argument it suggested that these same people were illegally promoting the caravans. This statement and others like it promoted the association of migrant and asylum seeker caravans with illegal acts.

Migrant human rights defenders were also criminalised. Several Mexican government representatives suggested that the activists supporting the caravans were involved in people smuggling, and particularly singled out the organisation Pueblos Sin Fronteras. In addition, two prominent defenders of the rights of migrants in Mexico were arrested on charges of people smuggling during Mexico–US negotiations over migrant mobility because of their activism and the role they had played as human rights defenders.

Caravans as an alternative to *coyotaje*

In contrast to the negative view that governments have of *coyotaje* services, migrants from low-wage regions use their services as a survival strategy. Data from a survey on migration in the southern border region of Mexico confirm that using *coyotes* has been a very widespread strategy among

Honduran, Salvadoran and Guatemalan people who travel through Mexico to reach the US.[1] However, the data suggest that fewer Hondurans have enough money to employ *coyotaje* services compared with Guatemalans and Salvadorans. Hondurans cross the country alone, in small groups or in caravans, using a combination of different strategies that allow them to travel despite having few or no economic resources. This may include travelling on foot or using freight trains, relying on the solidarity network of shelters that exists along the migration routes, or doing casual work en route. As an alternative to using the services offered by *coyotes*, caravans provide a safer way of travel for migrants, offering – through sheer numbers – protection, information and assistance, regardless of people's financial resources.[2]

The criminalisation of migrants, asylum seekers and defenders can also be observed in many other countries including the US, Spain and Morocco, and we can draw out the following lessons for all States. Firstly, do not use the discourse of the fight against people smuggling to legitimise migration control policies. Secondly, do not criminalise the mobility of migrants and refugees (in this case in the form of caravans) because of perceived connections with people smuggling. And finally, do not criminalise human rights defenders (either in discourse or practice); instead, enable them to carry out their humanitarian work without being harassed by any authority or criminal groups.

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The adverse effects of Niger's anti-smuggling law

Colleen Moser

The criminalisation of human smuggling in Niger has had a range of negative effects on migrants and asylum seekers, as well as on their former smugglers and host communities. Alternative avenues must be pursued.

Due to its position along traditional migration routes through West Africa, mixed flows of migrants and asylum seekers have historically passed through northern Niger. These mixed movements contained migrants searching for employment elsewhere in the region and a range of migrants and asylum seekers hoping to reach Europe, primarily via Libya. In this context, a relatively formalised smuggling system emerged, which eventually contributed substantially to the local economy.

However, as flows through the Sahel and Sahara grew during the early 2010s, the European Union (EU) became increasingly interested in preventing West Africans from arriving in Europe. Niger began cooperating with the EU on migration control and security policies, and in 2015 passed comprehensive national-level anti-smuggling legislation.[1] Building on the increased engagement in the region that had taken place over this period and in response to growing asylum seeker and migrant arrivals in Europe, the EU created its Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) to fund programmes in development, border control and migration in order to prevent irregular migration flows at their source.

Enormous quantities of EU development assistance have been allocated to Niger in recent years, including €1.2 billion between 2014 and 2020 alone. The EUTF, which has projects worth €253 million in Niger, has supported anti-smuggling efforts by training Nigerien border personnel and offering small business projects to former

smugglers as a livelihoods alternative. From the perspective of limiting flows through northern Niger these policies have been a success, with an estimated fivefold decrease from the pre-crackdown rates.[2]

However, this reduction has also led to numerous negative results. Firstly, by preventing all non-Nigerien citizens from travelling north of Agadez, the anti-smuggling law unjustly limits regional mobility. Many of those migrants and asylum seekers who have traditionally transited through northern Niger should be permitted to migrate legally through the country. Niger is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose Common Approach on Migration prioritises freedom of movement for ECOWAS citizens and emphasises the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.[3] This movement ban weakens Niger's efforts on both fronts by hindering the ability of ECOWAS nationals to circulate freely, and by impeding asylum seekers' ability to flee armed conflict and other violence in neighbouring countries such as Mali and Nigeria.

In addition, this crackdown on smuggling has had a severe impact on both the economy in northern Niger – an isolated region in one of the poorest countries in the world – and the economic opportunities available to migrants and asylum seekers. The ban's abrupt implementation left Nigeriens with no alternatives to the income they had been earning from the estimated hundreds of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers who crossed cities such as Agadez during the peak period of 2015 and 2016. This Nigerien population includes not only former transporters but also those who ran restaurants, hotels and shops used by those in transit. Furthermore, the curtailment of transit through Niger of those seeking employment opportunities in Algeria, Libya or elsewhere on the African continent has further exacerbated economic pressures in an already challenging environment.

Finally, this ban has created numerous security risks for smugglers, their would-be clients and the region's broader population alike. Although the flows have decreased,

they have not been entirely eliminated. Instead, smugglers and their clients have been forced to take alternative routes around Agadez and other well-policed locations, often shifting into neighboring countries such as Chad, where the routes are less safe or less well-known. Whereas, before, smugglers' vehicles were accompanied by State-sanctioned security personnel, the ban now incentivises smugglers to avoid police and the military at all costs, even if it means abandoning passengers in the desert. As a result, although complete data are unavailable, mortalities appear to have skyrocketed, with twice as many migrants estimated to die crossing the Sahara desert than the Mediterranean.[4] Furthermore, tensions between the native and migrant populations have increased, a worrying sign in a region already facing economic downturn and the threat of non-State armed groups.

Policy responses and analysis

Although some measures are being taken to protect those who are at risk of being abandoned by smugglers who fear punishment under the anti-smuggling law, these need to be extended and better supported. For instance, donors should consider increasing financial and logistical assistance for actors such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) that is currently conducting life-saving search and rescue missions in the desert. This additional funding could be coupled with guarantees of amnesty from Nigerien law enforcement for smugglers willing to divulge the routes taken or the locations of their stranded passengers. While this two-pronged approach does not address the underlying drivers of this phenomenon, it would go some way towards addressing the mounting death toll in the Sahara.

EU-funded livelihoods programmes have been framed as an alternative for smugglers, largely through their funding of small business creation. However, these programmes have been criticised for their slow roll-out times, strict eligibility criteria, and limitations in terms of replacing the income previously generated through

transportation, housing and provision of food to migrants and asylum seekers. These limitations also have gendered implications, with women (who were more likely to have indirectly participated in the smuggling industry) less able to access the already limited funding for alternative livelihoods activities. International funders such as the EU should prioritise the expansion of livelihoods programmes, while also ensuring that broader development cooperation and other financial assistance actually reaches and directly benefits recipients. While it is important to acknowledge that such systematic economic change is not a short-term process, clear steps to improve the current situation would contribute to a decrease in the widespread vulnerability and tensions in northern Niger. This easing of economic pressures could also alleviate hostilities towards asylum seekers and migrants still attempting to transit through Agadez.

Niger's anti-smuggling law and its de facto externalisation of European border enforcement have created extensive harm in northern Niger. Although the law was enacted by Nigerien authorities, its conception and implementation were clearly swayed by EU interests and funding. Ultimately, this type of control-oriented policy will never completely eliminate the underlying drivers of these mixed flows and will only continue to generate conflict, economic hardship and dangerous smuggling practices. The anti-smuggling law should be repealed, and Niger and the EU should instead consider alternative policies that better correspond to the regional context and the needs and interests of local people, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

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Tackling smuggling in the Balkans: policy lessons

Charles Simpson

Across the world, restrictive border security policies are being pursued in an attempt to tackle smuggling yet there is relatively little discussion of the evidence around what actually happens when these policies are enacted.

Shocked by the arrival of some 1.5 million refugees between 2014 and 2015, the European Union (EU) enacted a series of policies to secure its borders and prevent smuggling. These included militarising the land borders in the Balkans, building physical fences and other barriers, launching maritime patrols in the eastern Mediterranean, and detaining smugglers. The enforcement of security along the Western Balkans transit route between 2015 and 2017 was one of the largest multinational efforts in recent memory, and it offers useful lessons about the effects of such policies.

During this period I jointly conducted a two-year study of the route – from countries of first asylum like Jordan, through transit countries like Turkey, Greece and Serbia, into destination countries such as Germany.[1] The findings of this research offer lessons for other contexts where State institutions are attempting to restrict border movements and prevent smuggling. These include the US–Mexico border wall, Italy's maritime

A man found at the wheel of a boat carrying a group of Syrian refugees crossing the Aegean sea from Turkey is taken into custody by Greek police on the island of Lesvos on suspicion of smuggling.

operations off the Libyan coast, South Africa's immigration crackdowns, and the militarisation of borders across south Asia, including the India–Bangladesh border.

Impact on refugees

The impact of this State enforcement fell mainly on the migrants rather than on the smugglers, who were able to pass their increasing costs and risks onto their refugee clients. For example, prior to 2014, smugglers would regularly accompany refugees on their crossing from the Turkish coast to the Greek islands, afterwards returning to Turkey. Facing growing risk of interception and arrest after 2014, smugglers stopped accompanying refugees, instead giving them a tablet computer, a compass or often nothing more than a gesture in the direction of a light on the horizon to navigate the 24km crossing. Knowing that boats would be apprehended and destroyed, smugglers began using old unreliable vessels to minimise their operating costs, overcrowding dinghies far

beyond their capacities, and increasing the cost of a seat on board. To avoid detection by maritime patrols, boat launches began taking place at night, even in inclement conditions. These adaptations resulted in numerous sinkings and drownings, while smugglers remained safely on dry land.

Furthermore, the increased presence of State security actors – most of whom had been transferred from unrelated departments to fill capacity gaps, and therefore had little or no experience with refugees or border operations – resulted in numerous incidents of confusion among State security actors, or in violence by these actors against refugees who were mistaken for smugglers. For example, to avoid being arrested smugglers began assigning to a refugee the role of navigator; upon arrival on a Greek island this refugee navigator was often mistakenly identified by police as a smuggler and detained. Without training in how to differentiate smugglers from refugees, distinguish different nationalities or understand international

humanitarian law, police were unequipped to understand these experiences and often kept refugees incarcerated for months or longer, unsure about what to do.

The same trends of shifting risk onto refugee clients were reported on the land part of the Western Balkans route. Where previously smugglers had accompanied refugees, after 2014 they would point refugees in a general direction and tell them to keep walking until they reached a transit city. We spoke to refugees who were unaccompanied for hundreds of kilometres in the wilderness, suffering flu, symptoms of hypothermia, dehydration, poisonous insect bites and exposure to cold. The most severe incidents of shifted risk were from counter-smuggling operations that were surreptitiously delegated by national governments to paramilitary groups who were armed with machetes, firearms, dogs and all-terrain vehicles, violently assaulting refugees that they either misperceived as being 'illegal immigrants' or misidentified as smugglers.

Costs as well as risks increased dramatically: a pre-2014 level of several hundred US dollars per person per border crossing rose to $10,000 or more after 2017. As these costs spiked, smuggling became a luxury service available only to the wealthiest and best-connected refugees. Elaborate, extremely costly smuggling packages emerged, such as operations involving a yacht and crew, simulating a lavish personal cruise in order to avoid detection by maritime patrols on the lookout for cheap, rigid-hull inflatable dinghies. Other expensive options included fake passports with plane tickets and coaching on how to assume the fake identity.

By the end of 2017, the costs and risks of smuggling had begun to exceed the financial means and risk tolerance of most refugees, reducing the prevalence of smuggling in the Balkans in terms of absolute numbers. Having dodged any real risk, most smugglers simply found other work, living on savings while blending into cities along the route as part-time construction workers, tailors, barbers, traders or money lenders – although often still making approaches to newcomers

to offer a crossing to Greece at the right price. These smuggling networks remained mostly dormant until new pressures emerged to make the risks of the trip relatively lower than the risks of staying in the country of first asylum. For example, as a result of Turkish crackdowns on ethnic Kurds, hundreds of smuggled Kurdish Syrians are now appearing on a weekly basis in Greek cities from Athens to Thessaloniki.

Impact on citizens assisting refugees

Struggling to reach evasive and adaptive smugglers, State institutions also targeted humanitarian NGOs as the first point of intersection between the illicit and licit market activities. Along the Western Balkans route, the most heavily affected were small, local NGOs that have none of the resilience provided by the multi-million dollar budgets or legal offices of larger, international NGOs. For example, on the Greek island of Lesvos authorities were for the most part unable to detain high-level smugglers who managed operations remotely from Turkey while delegating risky work in Greek waters to lower-level operatives. As a result, Greek authorities began pressuring NGOs that were perceived to be facilitating smuggling operations. This included arrests of volunteers for the NGO Emergency Response Centre International for alleged collusion with smugglers in their attempts to prevent drownings of refugees crossing from the Turkish coast.

In Belgrade, Serbia, national policies focused on limiting local NGOs' freedom to operate. For example, one local NGO that reached thousands of refugees, Miksaliste, was required to relocate from its premises near the city's central bus station to a location far less accessible to the refugees who depend on its services. These efforts had the effect of breaking up civil society and limiting local humanitarianism, but did little to disrupt smugglers, who simply adapted to the changes. As an illustration, as the volume of licit non-food aid handouts from NGOs shrank, a booming grey/black-market economy emerged for everything from diapers to tents as smugglers saw

an opportunity to sell items that would previously have been donated to refugees.

'Strategic pre-emption' as an alternative

Rather than trying to shut smugglers down, States might instead offer safer, lower-cost, profit-making migration options in order to draw demand away from illicit actors. This 'strategic pre-emption' policy would mobilise national resources, including private licit businesses like bus companies, to provide transportation options that are safer, more affordable and more reliable than those offered by smugglers, thus creating de facto humanitarian corridors. It is worth considering that the annual budget of the EU's counter-smuggling mission Operation Sophia was $11.82 million. Meanwhile, smugglers made an estimated $1.8 billion from refugees in 2015.[2] Had Germany offered a practical means of reaching Germany (for example, via a $250 flight, the average cost of a ticket from Istanbul to Frankfurt) alongside its ambiguous promise of asylum, then based on the 600,000 Syrian refugees currently in Germany this would have generated at least $150 million, equivalent to meeting Operation Sophia operating costs for a decade. These funds might be applied to providing services and protection to other refugees who cannot afford even a reduced cost option for reaching safe countries. Smugglers would be out-competed and lose their revenue stream, preventing smuggling without military or policing efforts, and affording refugees a safe and efficient method for accessing the promised asylum.

Humanitarian organisations as allies

Admittedly, the policy of strategic pre-emption is unlikely to be pursued by any but the most forward-looking and pragmatic of State leaders. A more realistic policy suggestion based on the Western Balkans route is for State security institutions to see humanitarian civil society as potential allies and, instead of criminalising them, to allow them to provide alternative services. Before the crackdown on humanitarian NGOs in the Balkans, local NGOs were actively providing timely information to refugees on changing border policies; offering safe, temporary overnight accommodation; and sometimes buying bus tickets or other forms of legitimate transportation. In doing so, these local NGOs undercut the smugglers' services. After the closure of humanitarian NGOs, however, refugees had to turn to smugglers to obtain places in safe houses before continuing their journey to northern Europe. Similarly, in Greece's cities, local NGOs often provided cash-based temporary work for refugees; with NGO shutdowns or restrictions on the hiring of migrants, refugees had to turn to the illicit economy, sometimes having to sell narcotics or work as smugglers themselves to make ends meet.

Smuggling networks are adaptive and, like other private enterprises, able to efficiently shift the risks imposed by States onto their consumers. By out-competing smugglers and avoiding criminalising humanitarian organisations, States could reduce demand for smuggling while improving the safety and well-being of refugees and humanitarians alike.

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Choosing images for FMR

People's faces are important to bring words to life. However, we have to ask ourselves whether showing their image might – at some time and in some way that we cannot foresee – damage them or undermine their dignity.

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Refugee-led responses in the fight against COVID-19: building lasting participatory models

Alexander Betts, Evan Easton-Calabria and Kate Pincock

The formal structures of humanitarian aid are struggling to respond to the consequences of COVID-19. The work of refugee-led organisations is now more relevant than ever, and they need to be far better supported – both now and in the longer term.

Some of the most devastating consequences of COVID-19 will be in the developing world. Among the most vulnerable are refugees, 85% of whom live in low and middle-income countries. Within refugee camps, self-isolation and social distancing measures are nearly impossible to implement, and people are anxious amid the spread of misinformation. Meanwhile, many international staff from NGOs and the UN have been pulled out of refugee camps. Other international humanitarian organisations have significantly reduced their capacity and funding is stretched to breaking point or has been diverted. And in many cities, where humanitarian assistance has always been weakest, refugees face exclusion from access to government services including food distribution.

Below the radar, and in parallel to formal humanitarian assistance, many refugees are working to fill these gaps. Refugee-led organisations have long played an important but neglected role in providing protection and assistance to other refugees – and host communities – in camps and cities around the world. It is evident that many are highly valued by their communities, and some operate on an impressive scale.[1] However, they rarely receive international funding or recognition as key operational partners from a humanitarian system that is still premised upon a strong separation between the provider and the 'beneficiary'. This is despite refugees consistently saying that they rely on community-level support as much, if not more so, than international aid. For instance, when we surveyed refugees in Uganda and Kenya on their primary source of social protection, over 90% said that in an emergency they would first turn to community-level support rather than larger NGOs or international organisations.

Refugee-led responses in Uganda

In Uganda, home to around 1.4 million refugees, refugee-led organisations have been making important contributions to help provide support in both camps and cities during the pandemic. In the Nakivale Settlement in the south-west of Uganda, employees of the Wakati Foundation – who ordinarily work on small-scale building projects – have been sewing and distributing colourful face masks. The Foundation has also been raising awareness among the community about COVID-19. Further north, in Arua, the Global Society Initiative for Peace and Democracy has been building an information campaign focusing on preventive measures relating to hygiene and sanitation in the refugee camps to help slow the spread of the virus.

Many of the most acute challenges, however, are actually in urban areas. Some refugees have reported being less afraid of the virus than of its secondary consequences: restricted access to food, medicine and basic services. In Kampala in April 2020, for example, many refugees faced severe food shortages because of the lockdown. The government announced on national television that non-nationals would not get food aid, excepting those in refugee camps. According to attendees, in its urban coordination meetings on COVID-19, UNHCR recognised that refugees in Kampala needed urgent support, yet a combination of practical and funding constraints meant it was struggling to meet food and medical needs.

Urban refugee-led organisations are also trying to fill gaps. For example, in

Kampala, Hope for Children and Women Victims of Violence, which ordinarily supports refugees through vocational training, psychosocial support and English lessons, has distributed food and soap to refugees and Ugandans in the Ndejje area of the city. Meanwhile, Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID) has distributed baskets of food to the most vulnerable in the community, identifying recipients through community networks.

The response by refugee-led organisations is of course not unique to Uganda. Refugee-led assistance and protection can be found in every contemporary displacement crisis, from Myanmar to Venezuela, encompassing activities as diverse as education, health, livelihoods, finance and housing. While many organisations lack capacity, they often have a comparative advantage in terms of community-level trust, social networks, and adaptability – all of which are crucial in the context of a pandemic.

Localisation: needed more than ever

The World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 resulted in a Grand Bargain agreement which placed a strong emphasis on the concept of 'localisation', which recognises and supports people affected by crisis as important first responders. However, a significant gap remains between the rhetoric and reality surrounding this agenda, especially when it comes to working with organisations run by refugees. For the most part, the few organisations that thrive have done so by bypassing the humanitarian system altogether and by raising funding through international networks instead.

UNHCR is willing to work with these refugee-led organisations, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, but funding for working this way is virtually non-existent. Most donor governments impose significant accountability and compliance standards on grant recipients, which the majority of small-scale refugee-led groups are unable to meet. UN staff complain that refugee-led organisations can be challenging to work with, generally lack capacity, and are sometimes highly critical of the

UN and international NGOs. Meanwhile, national governments and national NGOs, especially those that hold privileged status as UN implementing partners, are often suspicious of refugee-led organisations.

In a pandemic, localisation absolutely cannot be a substitute for international donor funding and assistance, or for health-related expert knowledge and technical interventions. However, localisation and the more systematic engagement of crisis-affected communities and refugees themselves may have a crucial complementary role to play. In the context of COVID-19, refugee-led (and other community) organisations might play a number of roles in supporting humanitarian response:

Providing public information: One of the biggest issues in refugee camps is countering misinformation about the virus. Since the effectiveness of mass communication campaigns is likely to be affected by how socio-culturally embedded they are, working through community-level intermediaries will be crucial. There are already established networks within many refugee camps and communities. Where gaps exist, refugee-led organisations, especially those whose work intersects with health, might play a crucial 'bridging' role.

Deploying community health workers: In recent years, community health workers have been recognised as key actors in health delivery in developing countries, and they have increasingly been used in refugee settings. They can be rapidly trained and affordably equipped, and can play a range of roles from information sharing to tracking infections, as well as providing support in basic prevention, rehabilitation and health promotion.

Tracking and monitoring: In contexts in which social distancing measures are inhibited by dense and open housing, tracking the spread of infection is even more important. Many humanitarian organisations have already equipped displaced populations with mobile technology and apps capable of community-level reporting, on issues

YARID/Patrick Makombe

YARID staff delivering food during the pandemic to vulnerable refugees in Kampala, Uganda.

from the functioning of boreholes to school attendance and birth registration, and communities could use these to play a key role in supporting virus tracking.

Supplementing capacity gaps: With many senior humanitarian staff absent from refugee camps and aid budgets under threat, many social services in camps may become stretched. Local staff and volunteers have an important role to play in finding ways to deliver essential services like education, food distribution and water and sanitation under social distancing measures.

Influencing social norms: In wealthier countries, governments are widely using behavioural economics to design interventions to shape social compliance with public health policies. They have access to big data and eminent social scientists to design responses adapted to the cultural context. This approach is not readily available in many humanitarian settings. In refugee camps, for instance, shaping social norms relies on building community-level trust – and working proactively with refugee-led organisations may be the best available option of doing so.

At a global level, refugees are coordinating their responses, and there are growing voices of support for responses 'by refugees for refugees' during the pandemic.[2] The starting point needs to be the building of a coalition of people willing to take this seriously – one that includes refugee-led organisations, donor governments, foundations, NGOs and academics. Its focus should be on mapping organisational capacity, building best practices, and piloting new delivery mechanisms to get resources into the hands of frontline providers. Donors may need to be willing to accept higher levels of risk and reduce compliance standards. Most government donors worry about accountability to their own electorates, and this has been a particular issue in Uganda. Private money and pooled funds may be necessary to mitigate risk while piloting new funding mechanisms.

Historically, there has been a glaring asymmetry of power at the heart of the international refugee system. The participation of refugees, let alone their organisations, has rarely been encouraged. In the current crisis, there are strong imperatives to change this as a matter of necessity, particularly as the world faces the likely

possibility of subsequent waves of infections that impede many normal humanitarian operations indefinitely. If new partnerships can emerge, the COVID-19 crisis may represent a unique moment of opportunity to build lasting models of participatory and inclusive humanitarian governance.[3]

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2. See article by Alio, Alrihawi, Milner, Noor, Wazefadost and Zigashane in this issue. See also recordings of the recent RSC seminar series '#ByRefugees: strengthening refugee-led humanitarian response during the COVID-19 pandemic' bit.ly/RSC-ByRefugees

3. A version of this article first appeared in *The Conversation* on 28 April 2020
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See also 'The Localisation of Humanitarian Assistance as a Response to COVID-19', COVID-19 Watch, Kaldor Centre
bit.ly/Betts-EastonCalabria-Pincock-Kaldor-localisation

By refugees, for refugees: refugee leadership during COVID-19, and beyond

Mustafa Alio, Shaza Alrihawi, James Milner, Anila Noor, Najeeba Wazefadost and Pascal Zigashane

The response to COVID-19 calls for meaningful and substantive refugee participation and leadership.

The speed with which COVID-19 has spread worldwide has been as extraordinary as the impact it has had on communities. This includes refugee communities, but in very particular ways. From those in remote and isolated camps, to those living in precarious conditions in urban settings, to all whose movement has been blocked by the closing of borders and increased State controls, scores of refugees have been significantly affected both by the arrival of the virus and by State policies implemented in response.

In April 2020 the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) hosted a virtual international conference involving more than 100 refugee leaders. Participants shared how refugees have been excluded from health-care systems in hard-hit countries like Iran, how the shutdown of the economy in Uganda has made previously self-reliant refugees destitute and desperate, and how asylum seekers in Greece remain in cramped conditions ripe for the rapid spread of the virus.

Likewise, in Amman, Jordan, refugees previously reliant on access to the informal economy are no longer able to feed their families. Anxiety is high in remote refugee camps, like Kakuma in Kenya, and in urban contexts, like Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, due to a lack of information, basic sanitation or any capacity to respond to the pandemic.[1] And UNHCR has issued guidelines[2] in response to the particular challenges it expects will be faced by refugee women, older persons, survivors of gender-based violence, children, youth, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons.

Clearly, there is a need for urgent action **for** refugees. But equally important is the need to recognise, support and amplify the action already being undertaken **by** refugees.

Providing support, filling gaps

Refugee leaders and refugee-led organisations have mobilised to provide support and essential information in response to the pandemic within their

regions. In countries around the world, refugees are providing information and training, food distribution, legal support, online mental health support, and transportation for those in need of medical care, and are filling critical gaps in basic services including in health, education and protection. Refugees are also mobilising to raise awareness of how their fellow refugees are being affected by both the virus and by State responses.

For example, in Lebanon, local refugee-led organisations like Basmeh & Zeitooneh and the Molham Volunteering Team are working to support tens of thousands of families in need through providing food baskets, hygiene kits and cash support to pay monthly rents. Elsewhere, the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees, one of the GRN's regional chapters, has showcased as part of its #Refugeesrise campaign the many refugees and asylum seekers serving as health-care providers on the frontline of the pandemic response. The campaign has included live online events featuring health-care providers answering questions in Farsi, Dari and other languages. And in Kenya's Dadaab refugee complex, whose first case was reported in May 2020, the refugee-led initiative Dadaab Films has expanded its programming to include public health information to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

These localised responses, by refugees for refugees, are just some of the latest examples of how refugees are typically first responders to crises that affect their communities. These responses will need to be more fully appreciated and supported if we are to be able to effectively meet the critical challenges facing refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially where international actors – UN agencies, international NGOs and governments – are constrained by regulations that require them to restrict their movements.

In fact, when the UN launched its Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19,[3] it noted that the response would emphasise "the importance of involving and supporting local organizations" especially as the crisis

is "increasingly being characterized by limited mobility and access for international actors". Yet the US$6.7 billion requested from donors is being directed to the very multilateral actors that are constrained in their ability to respond. Yet again, refugee-led organisations, even those with the proven capacity to manage donor funds and mount effective responses, are not being included in a direct, meaningful and substantive way.

Honouring commitments to refugee participation

This marginalisation of refugee-led organisations comes just over a year after the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) was affirmed by the UN General Assembly. Its stated purpose is to "provide a basis for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing among all United Nations Member States, together with other relevant stakeholders… including… refugees themselves". In December 2019, at the first Global Refugee Forum, States, international organisations and a host of other actors re-affirmed the importance of meaningful refugee participation. Many took GRN's Refugee Participation Pledge.[4]

These commitments to refugee participation need to be honoured and implemented, now more than ever. It is not only the right thing to do – given normative commitments from the GCR, the Grand Bargain and the New York Declaration – but it is also a good thing to do. Many research projects have painted detailed pictures of the contributions refugees make to responding to the needs of their communities.[5] These valuable contributions complement the responses of international actors such as UNHCR, and their significance needs to be more fully reflected in research, policy and practice.

In **practice**, donors and humanitarian actors should collaborate closely and directly with refugee-led organisations in developing and implementing their responses to COVID-19. This should include direct funding to those refugee-led organisations that have the capacity to deliver and report on their impact.

Refugee-led organisations should also be included as part of the multilateral response to COVID-19, not only as implementers but as equal partners in planning.

In **policy**, refugee-led organisations need to be equal partners in discussions around how State responses to COVID-19 are affecting all communities, including refugees. They also need to be part of the planning for how the international community will continue to pursue global goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals, both during and after the pandemic. As detailed in GRN's Guidelines for Meaningful Refugee Participation,[6] this involvement in policy processes must be substantive rather than cosmetic, and have the capacity to affect outcomes.

Likewise, **research** on the impact of COVID-19 on refugees must include refugees in all stages of the research process, from design to data collection and analysis and the presentation of findings. The inclusion of refugees will lead to research that is better informed by the realities it seeks to explain and more likely to alleviate the suffering it studies.

These are important lessons not only for our response to COVID-19 but beyond. It remains to be seen if governments, international organisations, NGOs and other actors will emerge from the pandemic willing to recognise the role that refugee-led responses can play, or simply default to the old model of viewing refugees as the passive recipients of assistance. As the global refugee regime seeks to rebuild from this pandemic, it will be important to recognise how strong, meaningful and substantive refugee participation can help ensure that we build back better.[7]

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1. See reports from LERRN partners on local contexts in Jordan, Lebanon, Kenya and Tanzania
https://carleton.ca/lerrn/covid-19-updates-from-our-partners/

2. UNHCR (2020) 'Age, Gender and Diversity Considerations – COVID-19' www.refworld.org/docid/5e84a9dd4.html

3. UN (2020) *Global Humanitarian Response Plan*
bit.ly/UN-Global-Plan-COVID19-2020

4. www.globalrefugeelednetwork.org/pledge/

5. See for example
bit.ly/LERRN-Refugee-Participation-Kakuma-Nairobi;
bit.ly/RSC-Refugees-Social-Protection-Kenya-Uganda

6. Global Refugee-led Network (2019) *Meaningful Refugee Participation as Transformative Leadership: Guidelines for Concrete Action* bit.ly/GRN-Refugee-Participation-Guidelines-2019

7. A version of this article first appeared as 'By refugees, for refugees: Refugee leadership during COVID-19, and beyond' in the Kaldor Centre's COVID-19 Watch blog, 20 April 2020
bit.ly/Kaldor-Refugee-Leadership-200420

#ByRefugees – during COVID-19

In May–June 2020, the Refugee Studies Centre hosted a series of seminars on 'Strengthening refugee-led humanitarian response during the COVID-19 pandemic'. The panellists, which include practitioners, policy influencers, funders and community responders (and of which the majority are refugees), looked at how refugees are responding to the current crisis, reflected on how they can be supported by external actors, and considered the prospects for creating lasting forms of participatory humanitarian governance.

Series conveners: Shaza Al Rihawi, Anila Noor, Najeeba Wazefadost and Mustafa Alio (Global Refugee-led Network) with Alexander Betts and Andonis Marden (Refugee Studies Centre).

Recordings of all webinars available at
bit.ly/RSC__YouTube

Counting urban refugees during COVID-19

Florence Lozet and Evan Easton-Calabria

A case-study from Uganda demonstrates that authorities cannot provide the services and assistance that refugees need if they do not have good data on the refugee population. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights this issue while exacerbating the challenges facing urban refugees.

Like most countries around the world, Uganda has not been immune to COVID-19, and the situation in Arua Municipality highlights some of the most challenging lockdown issues affecting refugees. The district in which Arua Municipality is located hosts more than 250,000 South Sudanese refugees (of a total of more than one million across the country), with self-settled urban refugees making up an estimated 24%[1] of its total population. Despite these large figures, refugees are not included in the national census and there have been challenges in documenting them at the municipal level. This is true for secondary cities across Uganda (and even the capital Kampala has only estimates of the actual number of refugees in the city). This lack of data makes it very difficult for cities to adequately plan and provide for all their residents, and results in increasing pressure on public services including health and education. In times of emergency like this, it becomes even harder to understand the level of support needed and where those in need actually reside.

While there have only been 264 confirmed cases in the country (and very little testing), up to 19th May, the challenges of day-to-day survival are growing. In addition to closing places for public assembly (including schools), the government has banned public transport and non-food markets, and has closed shopping malls and non-food stores. One of the biggest challenges refugees are facing in lockdown is access to food. Usually, the poorest commute to the city to work, then go back to the settlements where their families reside and where they can get their food rations. Others depend on a monthly trip back to the settlement where they are registered in

order to collect their food rations. However, because of the ban on vehicle journeys this is no longer possible and there is no way to travel to the settlements. Although residing in urban areas while remaining registered in camps is not technically permitted in Uganda, this is the reality for many refugees. The failure to collect data on urban refugees is side-stepping this reality, and putting refugees in difficult and risky situations.

Access to food has also been restricted as only recognised market vendors can now sell their products in Arua, meaning that informal businesses and street vendors have been forced to stop selling. This reduction in market vendors has led to an overall reduction in the food supply and has resulted in an inflation of food market prices with a subsequent impact on Arua's entire population. In addition it has devastated the livelihoods of many refugees and members of the host communities who usually survive from day to day through selling in the informal sector. Mayor Kato of Arua Municipality has acknowledged this tension:

"We want to protect the population from COVID-19 but it seems at the same time that there are many restrictions on the market, causing hunger and panic among people."

While this situation is difficult for everyone, it is particularly challenging for refugees as the government does not offer them food rations (although at least in Kampala this stance appears to have changed due to international attention). Even if rations were available, however, it is unlikely that refugees would be eligible to receive them as they are not officially registered as living in Arua. One refugee said that, even in exceptional circumstances such as these:

"Since there is no data on how many refugees are in the city, there is no special consideration for the refugees in terms of food provision by the organisations."

No official back-up plan for urban refugee food distribution exists as the local authorities lack capacity as well as the data required to identify numbers and locations of refugees.

Gaps in urban refugee policy

This challenge is twinned with another. UNHCR and other international organisations rarely provide material assistance such as food or shelter in urban areas as, in most cases, urban assistance provision is not part of their mandate. In Arua, almost all international organisations are based in the municipality but operate solely in the camps. Urban refugees are expected to become self-reliant – yet it is unclear how this is meant to happen during a lockdown when freedom of movement and the informal street vending that most rely on are restricted. This leaves urban refugees caught between already stretched government support and humanitarian systems of support – and effectively eligible for neither.

In Arua, the World Food Programme (WFP) has agreed to change its policy and allow urban refugees to fill in forms so that friends or family in the settlements can collect their food rations for them. This change is crucial if WFP is to fulfil its commitment to reducing food insecurity, and other international organisations should consider similar changes in order to meet urban refugees' needs. It also reflects the reality of refugees' lives, which often are not centred solely on camps or cities but instead are more intertwined. Yet such institutional flexibility does not address the larger issue: that urban refugees are often unseen and unaccounted for.

This is an issue which COVID-19 – and responses to it – exacerbates rather than causes. If urban refugees were properly accounted for, the municipalities in which they reside could receive more resources from the central government to support their populations, including refugees. The amount of emergency support provided, such as food rations, could then reflect the actual number of those in need. Stronger health-care systems designed for the real number of inhabitants of municipalities, rather than just their citizens, could be created. And in turn the health and well-being of both urban refugees and Ugandans could be improved. The current pandemic highlights the need for the inclusion of urban refugees in censuses and government planning, and should be a wake-up call to international NGOs to address the extreme vulnerability of those urban refugees so often deemed 'self-reliant'.

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1. AGORA (2018) *Urban community assessment: Arua, Uganda – August 2018* bit.ly/AGORA-Arua-August2018

2. Cities Alliance is conducting two projects in Arua funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. One of these is a research project led by the Refugee Studies Centre on the role of local authorities in managing migration in Arua: bit.ly/RSC-uganda-ethiopia-cities

Supporting evidence-driven responses to COVID-19

Domenico Tabasso

The challenges of gathering data about displaced people and host communities are further complicated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the need to assess the impact of the pandemic is also driving innovations in collection, methodology, analysis and the sharing of expertise.

In mid-May 2020, two cases of COVID-19 were reported in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh. The news caused great concern because of the potentially devastating implications. Several features characterising the living conditions of forcibly displaced persons can facilitate a fast spread of the virus: the population density in refugee camps; limited access to health services; and existing levels of malnutrition, poor health and limited financial resources.

In the first four months of the COVID-19 pandemic the reported incidence of infection among displaced people was quite limited. However, a precise assessment of incidence of the disease in the context of displacement is constrained by the persistence of a long-known phenomenon: the paucity of reliable, publicly available data on the living conditions of displaced people, both within and outside camps.

Some of the defining characteristics of the disease have made the need for the collection and analysis of data on displaced people even more relevant. Several features of COVID-19 make it particularly hard to estimate its true spread across any studied population, even in developed economies. Symptoms are common to many other illnesses, a high percentage of infected individuals may not show any symptoms, and many of those who have died after contracting the virus already had severe underlying health conditions. This has led many experts to call for the strengthening of the collection and analysis of data in order to build more reliable and comparable systems for monitoring and forecasting infection. A study conducted by researchers from the London Business School[1] indicates how testing random samples of the population, recording their socio-demographic characteristics and inferring the characteristics most likely to predict whether or not an individual in the population as a whole is infected can be a valid approach to limiting the spread of the virus and ultimately reducing deaths.

Testing and resources

This strategy is certainly appealing but it relies on a very important precondition: the ability of national and local health authorities to conduct a sufficient number of tests, which cover a representative sample of the population. This condition is not easily met in many countries which are currently dealing with the largest numbers of displaced people.

Front-line health workers in UNHCR's newly opened Isolation and Treatment Centre, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, May 2020.

Estimating the number of tests that have been conducted in every country is of course very difficult, but the information available indicates that some of the countries which host large numbers of displaced people have conducted the lowest numbers of tests per

million people. Many of these are countries that have been crippled by conflicts and prolonged political instability and whose health-care systems are already severely underfunded. As an example, consider the case of South Sudan, which at the end of 2018 was home to more than two million displaced people, including almost 300,000 refugees. According to recent reports, in April 2020 the country's health system had available just four ventilators and 24 beds in intensive care units for a population of 11.7 million, more than half of whom lack access to primary health services.[2] As in other countries in the region, the COVID-19 crisis has worsened an already complex socio-economic situation where food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty are widespread. In under-resourced contexts like these, the direct and indirect costs of conducting the tests are such that the collection of health records and information on the incidence of COVID-19 among displaced people is simply not feasible. Moreover, the pandemic and the strategies for its limitation also have important consequences for the collection of individual and household-level data among those who have been displaced. For example, restrictions on travel and the need to reduce social contact have severely hindered the ability to gather data using traditional face-to-face interview methods.

To some extent, these hurdles exacerbate already existing difficulties. Those providing humanitarian assistance and those researching displacement are often working in the data-constrained contexts of emergencies. Accordingly, the need for evidence-based decisions has required the development of initiatives for the systematic collection, rigorous analysis and open publication of data. One such example is the recently created World Bank–UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC), a collaboration between the two multilateral institutions which aims to improve the quality and quantity of microdata to support evidence-based policy decisions and response to global displacement crises.[3]

In addition to the knowledge and best practices that already exist, the JDC has

invited researchers within its own network to outline their plans to analyse the impacts of COVID-19 on displaced people. The results show that the COVID-19 crisis has led to an additional and accelerated effort in implementing innovative research and data collection methods.

Adapting research methodologies

The responses collected by the JDC, as well as notes on methodologies released by other actors in this period, indicate that high-frequency phone surveys represent one method of data gathering that is becoming more common as a result of the difficulties in conducting interviews in person. Hence, several institutions, including the World Bank, have stepped up their efforts in this direction. After being anonymised and appropriately aggregated, mobile phone data can also be employed for tracking the mobility patterns of displaced people. The ability to measure mobility has gained in importance in the current circumstances given the need to evaluate the socio-economic integration of displaced people, and to compare it with pre-pandemic levels.

The widespread use of technologies in the gathering and analysis of data, as well as in the tracking and monitoring of movement, are also gaining momentum at a global level as a way of controlling and limiting the spread of COVID-19. This risks exacerbating the differences between the responses of developed countries (where access to new technologies is simple and affordable) and those of developing countries. Moreover, it poses some important questions regarding the way digital information is stored and handled. In this respect the humanitarian sector has plenty of experience to offer.[4] UNHCR and other humanitarian actors, who have developed practices and guidelines for dealing with highly sensitive data, can bring useful insights to this debate, which is of interest to governments and institutions around the world, not just those in countries hosting displaced people.

Modern technologies are also being employed in other exercises to assess the response of humanitarian programming to

the threat posed by COVID-19. New online-based communities are emerging for sharing data, information and best practices among practitioners and humanitarian actors. One such example is the COVID-19 Humanitarian Platform,[5] which aims to facilitate knowledge exchange relating to field experiences during the pandemic. These collaborative efforts can help overcome some of the limitations of data gathering being reliant on a widespread use of internet and mobile technologies, which otherwise risks systematically excluding the poorest and the most isolated communities from relevant surveys and, ultimately, from access to financial and material resources.

Evaluating additional effects

In many instances, it is not only data collection methods but also the research questions that are undergoing adaptation. If data are appropriately collected, the shock caused by the pandemic can offer researchers the possibility of evaluating how both the disease and the preventive strategies can exert different effects on the socio-demographic characteristics of displaced people and host communities. The virus has hit in different ways communities that share many common features; similarly, containment strategies have been implemented following different protocols and strategies. These differences will influence the lives of the affected individuals, for example in terms of their employment or educational opportunities. A comparison of life trajectories based on detailed data can allow the effects of the pandemic on these variables to be isolated from effects that can instead be attributed to other factors. Moreover, research efforts are also being devoted to the assessment of changes in attitudes towards displaced people during this period of social and economic insecurity. As the pandemic is leading to a severe economic crisis, this may foster xenophobic acts or discrimination against displaced persons. A quantification of these effects can prove extremely useful for the development of policies to prevent the spread of these attitudes throughout future crises.

As the virus began to spread, international organisations launched their appeals for funds to protect the most vulnerable people around the world. For example, UNHCR increased its appeal for funds from US$255 million to $745 million. At a time when governments around the globe face unprecedented economic uncertainty, there needs to be additional care in the way that resources are managed and allocated. Thus, the availability of up-to-date data is crucial in informing these resource management decisions, as well as the policy decisions taken by local and national governments.

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The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the JDC or its founding institutions.

1. Surico P and Galeotti A (2020) 'The economics of a pandemic: the case of Covid-19' bit.ly/Surico-Galeotti-COVID-19

2. International Rescue Committee (2020) *COVID-19 in humanitarian crises: a double emergency*, bit.ly/IRC-COVID-19-Humanitarian-Crisis

3. Among its activities, the JDC is currently organising its second annual conference on forced displacement. The call for papers is available at bit.ly/JDC-2nd-conference

4. Zwitter A and Gstrein O J (2020) 'Big data, privacy and COVID-19 – learning from humanitarian expertise in data protection', *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 5(4) bit.ly/Zwitter-Gstrein-COVID19-Big-Data-2020

5. www.covid19humanitarian.com

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