State fragility, displacement and development interventions

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The development approach to displacement brings advantages not only in addressing the needs of refugees, IDPs and host communities but also in helping societies tackle the underlying aspects of fragility that may have caused the displacement.

The absence of capable and legitimate institutions in a country exposes citizens to human rights abuses, criminal violence and persecution, all of which are recognised, explicitly or implicitly, both as direct causes of displacement and as signs of fragility.[1] The combination of exposure to internal and external stresses and the strength of a country's 'immune system' (the social capability for coping with stress embodied in legitimate institutions) will determine how fragile the country is. The stresses could be either security-related – legacies of violence and trauma, external invasion, external support for domestic rebels, cross-border conflict spillovers, transnational terrorism and international criminal networks; or justice-related – human rights abuses, real or perceived discrimination, and ethnic, religious or regional competition; or economic in nature – youth unemployment, corruption, rapid urbanisation, price shocks and climate change. Some of these stresses (such as youth unemployment, price shocks, poorly managed natural resource wealth and corruption) could indirectly lead to people becoming refugees or IDPs.

The existence of such stresses alone does not lead to violence or conflict. Countries or regions with the weakest institutions are the least able to withstand and respond to internal and external stresses and are the most vulnerable to violence and instability. In fragile situations, however, the state is not the only actor; in some cases it may not even be the most powerful actor. Although some elements of fragility emanate from the state, others are deeply rooted in societal dynamics — the way individuals and groups interact, including the relationships between groups in society and the state. Therefore, fragility should not be viewed as only a problem of state capacity.

The areas hosting the displaced are often affected by conflict and displacement, and host communities and areas often do not have the institutional capacity to deliver or manage the delivery of the necessary protection and assistance to the displaced. For instance, in Mogadishu, Somalia, the failure of state institutions to work with the various national and international actors that are providing assistance to IDPs has led to IDP camps being controlled by 'gatekeepers' connected to local powerbrokers who regularly demand as 'rent' a portion of the international aid the IDPs receive.

Conflict and fragility also hinder the pursuit of durable solutions for displaced populations. Fragility undermines durable solutions, in particular voluntary repatriation, in various ways. First, the fragility of areas of origin, the main cause of displacement

in the first place, makes the whole idea of return unattractive to the displaced and to the institutions providing assistance. Even if the areas of return are considered to be safe and free of conflict or violence, the absence of capable and legitimate institutions still makes it harder for the returnees to be self-dependent. If the institutions in the areas to which people may return fail to properly manage land and property disputes, the returnees will find it difficult to restore their livelihoods or find shelter. And the absence of strong and capable institutions that address issues of discrimination and marginalisation prevents the returnees from effectively pursuing income-generating activities and getting access to the services they need.

How does displacement affect state fragility?
Neglected or poorly managed displacement, particularly protracted displacement, can exacerbate situations of conflict and fragility. Cross-border conflict spillovers – with accompanying refugee flows – are among the security-related stress factors that lead to fragility. The influx of refugees into the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire, as it then was) after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda is often cited as one of the factors that has contributed to the conflict there. The influx of displaced persons often overwhelms the institutional capacity of host communities. In addition to putting a strain on weak institutions, displacement can cause or exacerbate difficult relations between the displaced and the host communities.

It should be noted, however, that the presence of refugees and IDPs does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes; it could also lead to positive outcomes. For instance, the presence of Rwandan refugees in Tanzania has led to increased demand for agricultural products produced by Tanzanian farmers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, on average, farmers doubled the size of their cultivated land and their production of bananas and beans during the period 1993-96. In Kenya, the presence of a large number of refugees in the Dadaab area has increased economic opportunities for the local communities.

What determines the impact of the presence of displaced people is how displacement is managed to mitigate the negative impacts and build on the positive impacts.

These dimensions of the fragility-displacement nexus underscore the strong need for better synergies between efforts to address fragility and the international responses to forced migration. To break cycles of insecurity and to reduce the risk of their recurrence, national reformers and their international partners should build legitimate institutions that can provide sustained levels of citizen security, justice and jobs. The process of building institutions is commonly subject to setbacks, and in any case building institutions is a slow process. Even the fastest-transforming countries have taken between 15 and 30 years to raise their institutional performance from that of a fragile state to that of a state with functioning institutions.

The difficulty and the slow pace of transforming institutions mean that there is a need to restore local confidence in collective action before embarking on a wider institutional transformation. Confidence building is essential because low trust means that stakeholders who need to contribute political, financial or technical support will not collaborate until they believe that a positive outcome is possible. Confidence building includes signalling a real break with the past – for example, ending political or economic exclusion of marginalised groups, corruption or human rights abuses, all of which are causes of displacement. Just as violence begets violence, so efforts to build confidence and transform institutions typically follow a positive spiral. In this regard, carefully tailored development interventions addressing displacement have been useful. For instance, the provision of housing services to Rwandan IDPs and cash transfer payments for IDPs in Timor-Leste have been used to signify the state's concern for the victims of violence or those previously excluded from state services. Such interventions foster the participation of excluded groups or areas in economic

and political decision-making, enabling them to benefit from development assistance and signaling a real break with the past.

A development approach to displacement

The international response to displacement has predominantly been humanitarian in nature. Humanitarian interventions, while extremely useful in saving lives during emergencies, are not tailored to the needs of the majority of the world's refugees and IDPs, who are in protracted displacement situations which have moved beyond the initial emergency phase but for whom solutions do not exist in the foreseeable future. Too often, international attention begins to fade after the initial emergency phase, and long-term support becomes less predictable as displacement situations become protracted. In these situations, the challenge is often developmental rather than humanitarian in nature. The development challenges of protracted displacement situations include the re-establishment of livelihoods, the equitable delivery of services and accountable and responsive governance, which is critical to ensuring that issues affecting the displaced are resolved in ways that are viewed as legitimate both by the displaced and by host communities. In situations of return, the restoration of land, housing and property is also a major challenge that requires immediate attention if the return of the displaced is to lead to a durable solution to displacement.

By creating better synergies between efforts to address fragility and efforts to address displacement, the development approach is better suited to addressing the spillover effects – including refugee flows – from neighbouring countries' conflicts, one of the external stress factors overwhelming weak institutions. A development approach to displacement means contributing to building institutions that help mitigate the stresses caused by large-scale displacement and is useful in building on or taking advantage of the positive impacts.

Compared to humanitarian interventions, the development approach to displacement is better suited to building institutions that deliver citizen security, justice and jobs in areas affected by displacement. If designed and implemented properly, development interventions designed to improve the livelihoods of the displaced and the host communities could contribute to building institutions by addressing for example discriminatory laws that restrict the right to work and the freedom of movement of the displaced. Similarly, efforts to restore land, housing and property that belonged to the displaced are useful in building institutions delivering justice. Efforts to improve service delivery invariably contribute to improving the institutions that deliver citizen security and rule of law.

Efforts to address marginalisation and human rights abuses will not only improve the lives of refugees and IDPs but also contribute to addressing fragility by building confidence. Taking a development approach to displacement will improve the lives of the displaced and host communities and facilitate the pursuit of durable solutions. It will also allow societies to mitigate the negative impacts of displacement and capitalise on the positive impacts. The utility of a development approach to forced displacement goes beyond addressing the needs of the displaced. It is also useful in addressing conflict and fragility by contributing to efforts to build the institutions that provide citizen security, justice and jobs and by building confidence. The focus on building institutions will also contribute to preventing future incidences of displacement.

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The discussion on fragility is informed by two recent World Bank publications on the topic: *The World Development Report: Conflict, Security and Development* (2011) and *Societal Dynamics and Fragility* (2013).

1. For example in the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.