

Strengthening policy responses to protracted displacement: TRAFIG policy handbook

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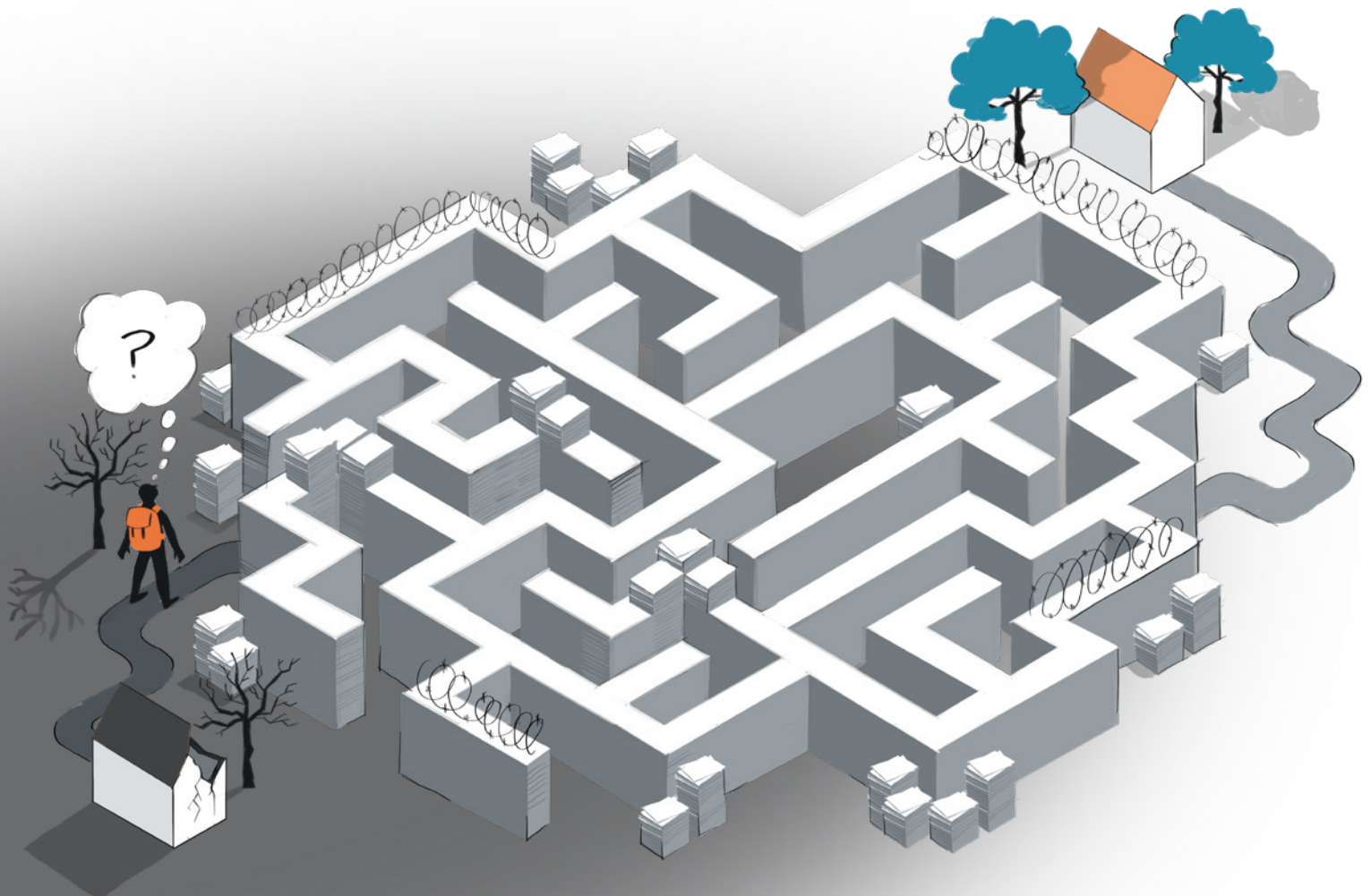
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April 2022

STRENGTHENING POLICY RESPONSES TO PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT

TRAFIG policy handbook



TRAFIG

Transnational Figurations of Displacement

STRENGTHENING POLICY RESPONSES TO PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT

TRAFIG policy handbook

Displacement is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges facing the world today. At the end of 2020, more than [82 million people](#) across the globe were categorised as forcibly displaced, whether remaining within their countries of origin or having crossed an international border. If this group were a country, it would [rank 20th](#) in the world in terms of population, right after Germany. An increasing number of refugees – [16 million in 2020, or 4 million more than in 2016](#) – find themselves in a long-term situation of vulnerability, dependency, and legal insecurity, lacking, or actively denied, opportunities to rebuild their lives. Such situations are termed ‘protracted displacement’. While not captured in these statistics, internally displaced persons (IDPs) may also find themselves in situations of protracted displacement. While the protracted nature of many conflicts is a critical contributing factor, there is considerable room for improvement in policies and practices to more effectively address protracted displacement.

This is where the EU-funded Transnational Figurations of Displacement (TRAFIG) research project has aimed to contribute. Undertaking more than 2,700 interviews with displaced persons, policymakers, and practitioners in 11 countries across the Middle East, East Africa, and Europe, the TRAFIG project investigated the reasons why people end up in protracted displacement situations and what coping strategies they use, thus identifying possible courses of action for policymakers. This handbook shares 10 takeaways for strengthening policy responses to protracted displacement that have emerged from this endeavour, with empirical examples and policy recommendations, as well as a non-exhaustive list of promising practices for inspiration. These 10 points centre on the TRAFIG project goal of identifying solutions that are better tailored to the needs and capacities of displaced persons.



10 TRAFIG TAKEAWAYS



1 *PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT IS A SIDE EFFECT, IF NOT A DELIBERATE CONSEQUENCE, OF POLICY CHOICES*

The gap between the scale of displacement and the solutions offered for displaced persons is growing ever wider. Protracted displacement is often an accepted, or even intended, outcome of policy choices. This backfires in many ways: It often exacerbates precarity and prevents displaced persons from contributing to receiving communities.

2 *A PARADIGM SHIFT IS NEEDED TO PUT PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF SOLUTIONS*

A shift away from state-centred solutions towards a people-centred approach is necessary. Beyond providing rights and basic needs, taking into account the capacities and resources (or lack thereof) of displaced persons, offers new perspectives and opens new doors for people to become ‘self-reliant’.

3 *PROTECTION IS NOT JUST ABOUT PHYSICAL SAFETY & SECURITY- IT IS ALSO ABOUT SUSTAINABLE FUTURES*

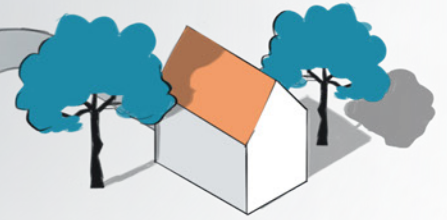
Contrary to common perceptions, people who find safety somewhere else do not necessarily also find an environment that enables them to rebuild their lives. Public debate tends to concentrate on the physical protection of forced migrants fleeing persecution or war. In this narrative, too little attention is paid to the equally important need for them to build a sustainable future. Physical protection cannot be sustainable without access to work and education, the possibility to reunite with family, and psychological well-being, as well as other elements that ensure that displaced persons are truly included in their new communities.

4 *KEEPING PEOPLE CONNECTED CAN UNLOCK OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISPLACED PERSONS*

We are social beings. Just like everyone else, displaced persons are embedded in a range of networks. These networks can be personal, such as family ties, and professional, like business relationships. They are local, national, and transnational. While displacement interrupts networks, maintaining existing connections and building new ones assists people in coping with displacement and accessing opportunities related to housing, livelihood, and more. Organisations can help.

5 *RATHER THAN A PROBLEM, MOBILITY CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION*

Mobility after initial displacement is the norm, not the exception. Moving on can enable displaced persons to pursue opportunities that they cannot find locally. This means that local, national, and transnational restrictions on mobility limit a displaced person’s ability to find a ‘durable solution’. On the contrary, allowing mobility, and providing rights and support to displaced persons where they are, can help improve their prospects.



6

IDPs REQUIRE MORE ATTENTION & OFFER VALUABLE LESSONS FOR HELPING REFUGEES

The majority of displaced persons worldwide do not cross an international border. However, while the number of IDPs is high, they are frequently overlooked. Many have to fend for themselves, and they often turn to new and existing contacts in their quest to become self-reliant. Connections and resources in communities of origin have proved a critical source of sustenance in displacement for some, pointing to factors that could also help refugees.

7

WELCOMING DISPLACED PEOPLE SHOULD NOT COME AT THE EXPENSES OF HOST COUNTRIES & COMMUNITIES

There is no doubt that the reception of displaced persons is associated with great cost and sacrifice by receiving countries and communities. The international community must assure that taking responsibility for displaced persons is appropriately acknowledged and supported through aid and financial contributions. At the same time, receiving countries and communities, by providing refugees and IDPs with rights, can benefit from the contributions of displaced persons in local economies and societies.

8

LEVERAGE VIRTUAL OPPORTUNITIES SO THAT DISPLACED PERSONS CAN STAY CONNECTED

Technology can help displaced persons to maintain their connections to people across the street or across the world. Staying connected also allows them to access digital opportunities to study, start a business, or find employment – key elements of earning a livelihood and becoming part of a new community. The digital world opens up new paths and possibilities for forced migrants looking to rebuild their lives.

9

NOTHING ABOUT DISPLACED PERSONS WITHOUT DISPLACED PERSONS

Displaced persons themselves are an indispensable resource for finding durable solutions for their own displacement – and for other displaced persons. Yet, their expertise is not heard often enough. Similarly, refugee-led organisations often play an important role on the ground, and understand community experiences and needs, but are seldom heard in policy discussions. Policies must be informed by displaced persons.

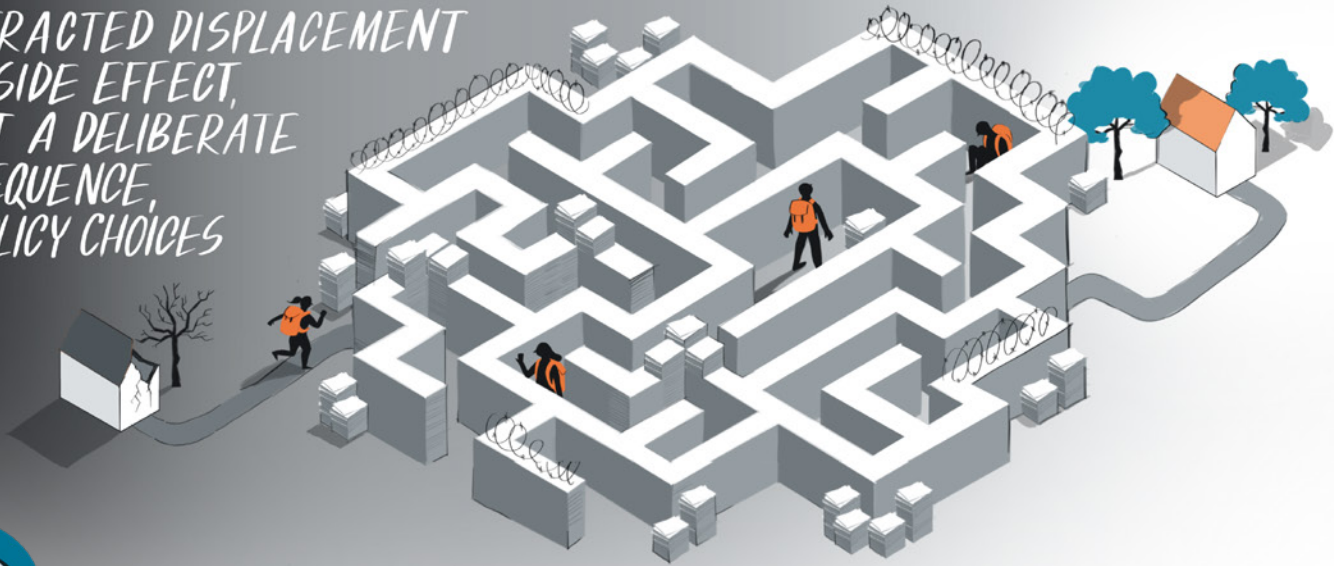
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WORK ACROSS POLICY SILOS TO ENSURE THAT THE SUM IS GREATER THAN ITS PARTS

Development and humanitarian aid, migration and displacement, social welfare and local integration, and internal and external policy are all viewed within separate silos. Synergies and the bigger picture often get lost in the process, hindering the overall response to displacement. More effective collaboration can help policies and programmes to address protracted displacement – and reduce the risk that new displacements become long lasting.

TAKEAWAY 1

PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT IS A SIDE EFFECT, IF NOT A DELIBERATE CONSEQUENCE, OF POLICY CHOICES



What do we mean?

The gap between the scale of displacement and the solutions offered for displaced persons is growing ever wider. International, national, or local laws, policies, and practices (or a lack thereof) determine the status, rights, and opportunities enjoyed by displaced persons. Protracted displacement is often an accepted, or even intended, outcome of these policies and practices. This backfires in many ways: It exacerbates precarity and prevents displaced persons from contributing to receiving communities. Further, it shifts the responsibility to provide suitable solutions to the displaced persons themselves and to receiving communities – and from the present to the future. Geography, rather than the reception capacities of host countries, determines where displaced persons can access protection. International refugee law fails to regulate displaced persons' access to countries that have the capacity and economic strength to offer them new prospects. As a result, [86% of refugees](#) depend on low- and middle-income countries to take them in – countries whose own citizens may be struggling to access basic services and opportunities such as work, education, and health.

*"I wasted thirteen years of my life, and I do not know what will happen next. I am just waiting and waiting."
--Eritrean man, 20-29, interviewed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*



What did TRAFIG find?

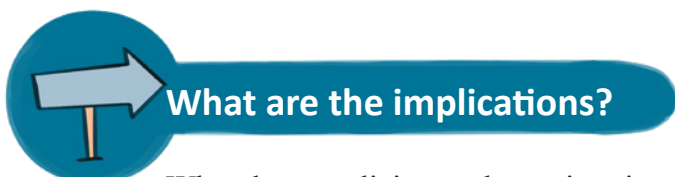
A lack of national legislation, as well as over-complex asylum structures, prevents displaced persons from enjoying protection as guaranteed under the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention). Despite hosting significant numbers of refugees, [Pakistan](#) and [Jordan](#) have not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, nor have they developed asylum legislation that would comprehensively regulate the status, rights, and obligations of displaced persons received. On the other hand, EU Member States have signed the Refugee Convention, but [have developed policies and asylum procedures](#) that too often undermine the rights of refugees.

Complex interplays between different regulations (including the Dublin Regulation, hotspot approach, and the [EU-Turkey Statement](#)), long waiting times for decisions in the responsible country, as well as a wide range of different statuses and corresponding rights (see [Germany](#)) make it difficult for refugees in Europe to rebuild their lives. Additionally, family reunification from third countries to the EU or within the EU is administratively burdensome and prevents many from reuniting ([Germany](#)). Rather than unintended consequences, these practices are often calculated policies aimed at discouraging more refugees from coming ([see Takeaway 5](#)).

Policies link already scarce rights and aid programmes for displaced persons with their immobility. Policies include formal punishment for leaving certain areas, like the camps in [Tanzania](#); offering greater aid benefits in camps, but fewer opportunities and limited individual freedom ([Jordan](#)); providing support for IDPs in rural areas, but not in urban areas ([DRC](#)); linking reception, integration, and rights with the first EU country of entry; and different mobility restrictions in [Italy](#), [Greece](#), and [Germany](#) during the asylum procedure, and sometimes even beyond.

Rights on paper are too often not granted in practice. While countries may engage at the international level by signing international agreements on refugee and IDP protection or adopting respective national laws to improve displaced persons' access to rights and services, far too often the corresponding practical implementation lags behind. Despite engagement by the DRC with regional agreements on IDPs – and the high numbers of IDPs in that country – no national legislation has been adopted in this area ([DRC](#)). [Ethiopia](#) also did not follow up on the promising legal developments included in its 2019 Refugee Proclamation; in the meantime, the outbreak of war has increased displacement in the country. Although provided for, access to work, residence permits, and local integration remained solely on paper – as did the out-of-camp policy for many refugees. Attempts to legalise the precarious status of displaced persons, for example in [Italy](#) in 2020, also remained theoretical, as they were implemented half-heartedly and thus did not substantially benefit the vast majority of displaced persons.

"It is difficult for migrants to understand the Dublin Regulation. They perfectly understand the issue of the country of first entry, but they cannot understand why if they have family members in another member state, they cannot join them."
--Italian legal expert, interviewed online



What are the implications?

When laws, policies, and practices impede displaced persons from rebuilding their lives, those who can afford it will seek ways to navigate or circumvent legal and practical obstacles. For some, these strategies may pay off, but, for most, this will only lead deeper into irregularity and precarity, with life-threatening circumstances faced during flight. With ever increasing numbers of people forced to leave their country, the number of people who cannot find sustainable solutions will also rise, particularly if the vast majority of responsibility is shifted to developing countries. But it does not have to be this way.

Policy recommendations



Provide solutions, not deterrence: The aim of regional and national laws, policies, and practices in relation to migration must be to provide solutions for displaced persons, not to deter them.

Ratify and apply existing frameworks: To avoid negative consequences of displacement like marginalisation and precarity, it is first and foremost necessary for states to ratify and apply global international protection conventions, above all the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Keep protection structures simpler: Western countries in particular, including EU Member States, must redesign migration and asylum laws. Reform must prioritise the embedding of more understandable and leaner migration and international protection policies.

Address displacement proactively: Stakeholders must break with the common misconception that non-action and the containment (i.e. immobility) of displaced persons can solve anything. Policymakers need to proactively address the situation of both displaced persons and receiving societies.

Promising practices



- [Colombia](#) has granted 10-year temporary protected status to Venezuelans in the country, regardless of their previous status, enabling them to work and access services.
- [Visa-free regime](#) for Ukrainians within the Schengen area offered millions of forcibly displaced people the chance to reach safety in other countries than first countries of asylum without depending on irregular and dangerous routes. Venezuelans have also benefitted from visa-free travel.
- Migrant Resource Centres, such as those operated by [ICMPD](#) and [IOM](#), help people make informed decisions when considering migration and navigate complex legal rules and institutional frameworks.
- [Temporary Protection](#) in the EU for people fleeing the Russia-Ukraine War shows that policies can be adopted that facilitate access to rights and services if there is political will.
- With a [“once-in-a-generation scheme”](#), Ireland opened on 1 January 2022 the door for six months for the regularisation of undocumented migrants who have been in Ireland for at least four years and for asylum applicants who have been waiting for a decision for two years or more.

TAKEAWAY 2

A PARADIGM SHIFT
IS NEEDED
TO PUT PEOPLE
AT THE HEART
OF SOLUTIONS



What do we mean?

Solutions for displaced persons are often lacking or are not tailored to individuals' needs and experiences – and do not consider their skills and resources. A paradigm shift away from state-centred solutions towards a people-centred approach is necessary to enable more people to rebuild their lives after displacement. Beyond providing rights and basic needs, taking into account the displaced person's capacities and resources (including any training needs) offers fresh perspectives and opens new doors for people to become 'self-reliant'. Receiving countries should enable displaced persons to make use of their own capacities, putting people at the heart of the search for solutions.

"You don't have the opportunity in the camp to go out and work with the knowledge and the skill you have."

--Eritrean man, 39, interviewed in Shimelba Refugee Camp, Ethiopia



What did TRAFIG find?

Conventional perspectives on protracted displacement centre on the priorities and capacities of states to offer solutions *for* displaced persons. However, to overcome protracted displacement, a paradigm shift is needed, enabling more refugees to find the solutions that match *their own* needs and aspirations. This means acknowledging the skills and resources of displaced persons, including their networks ([see Takeaway 4](#)), and seeing them as [part of the solution](#). It also means putting in place policies that support displaced persons in making use of their capacities and networks, including through mobility ([see Takeaway 5](#)).

Displaced persons possess human capital and make use of a variety of support networks, though not all to the same degree. This form of capital can be social, financial, intellectual, or technical. It can consist of networks of families, friends, or business partners back home or abroad ([see Takeaway 4](#)). This valuable resource can help displaced persons to rebuild their lives, but remains mostly overlooked and untapped by policymakers and programmes. If it takes the skills and capacities of displaced persons into account, smaller yet tailored support can achieve greater impact than broader, less bespoke support.

The level of the displaced person’s human and social capital determines the level of support required. Those who lack the financial means or human or social capital necessary to find a solution on their own are most vulnerable to becoming stuck in protracted displacement situations. This group may thus need more intensive support from humanitarian, development, and integration stakeholders. Others might benefit from more targeted assistance in order to leverage their networks and utilise their skills to find sustainable solutions. Those with very strong human, social, and financial capital, in turn, may not require any support. They may barely enter international protection regimes, despite being forced to leave alongside other migrants, or not enter at all.

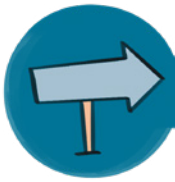
Acknowledging displaced persons’ diverse human, social, and financial resources offers a chance for individualised and tailored solutions that can inform or even complement conventional solutions. According to the [TRAFIG survey](#) conducted, 42% of the 1,897 displaced persons interviewed maintained contact with relatives in other countries beyond their current stay – particularly with relatives in other third countries within the region and in Europe, but also in their home countries. Family members and friends are an important potential source of support for many displaced persons ([see Takeaway 4](#)). Support can be financial, in the form of remittances, if transfer costs are kept low. Family members can create third-country solutions through family reunification ([see Takeaway 5](#)) if this pathway is more flexible, quick, and available to a broader group of displaced persons and relatives. Family members, as well as more distant relatives or diaspora members, could also be allowed to sponsor relatives or friends by naming the refugee they wish to sponsor. Concerned citizens more generally could also be permitted to sponsor the arrival and reception of refugees, enabling them to leverage existing personal connections and build new ones. There are multiple ways in which support from contacts can act as a step out of protractedness, if policy supports such initiatives and breaks down unnecessary barriers.

Professional contacts can support local livelihoods, especially if they are better leveraged by providing information and communication technology (ICT) solutions that allow for remote work ([see Takeaway 8](#)) or by enabling third-country solutions; for instance, if a secured job opportunity in a third country is linked with the right to move there legally by reducing legal barriers to refugee mobility.

Education and work experience are essential for improving job prospects and creating real futures for displaced persons. Leveraging educational pathways, facilitating apprenticeships, and providing opportunities to gain professional experience through short-term work opportunities or recognising the skills and qualifications of displaced persons are just some examples of how states can tap into the human capital of displaced persons.

Return may be a desirable solution, but it is a decision based on a very individual assessment by displaced persons – earlier on for some and later (or never) for others. However, TRAFIG research did find that the temporary visit of displaced persons to their home ([see Takeaway 6](#)) helps them to maintain their networks and make a living from the resources left there (such as harvests) – without ceasing the need for international protection. Indeed, the research showed that the more secure the legal status of displaced persons, the higher their return rate to their place of former residence (temporarily or permanently).

While the most vulnerable require the most support, they too may possess human capital that could help pave the way for a solution without necessarily using scarce resettlement places. For example, young students may be vulnerable but could also access educational pathways to a third country.



What are the implications?

It is not only the scale of protracted displacement but also the diversity of individual profiles and experiences that underscore the need to expand the range of solutions. These solutions – whether in countries of origin, neighbouring countries, or farther afield – should be tailored to individuals, taking their differing human and social capital into account. This entails recognising the human and social capital of displaced persons that already exists, as well as finding innovative ways to tap into these resources and help develop them further. Solutions built on displaced persons' own priorities, capacities, and networks should complement conventional approaches. Simply put, such an approach can lead to more and better results for the people and countries concerned. However, 'self-reliance' should not become an excuse for leaving people without needed support.

"I can learn, do an apprenticeship. I can live independently. I [do] not want to sit like a poor woman [only at home]. I am young, I have strength, I want to work."
--Eritrean woman, 20-29, interviewed in Karlsruhe, Germany

Policy recommendations



Secure fundamental rights: Fundamental rights are the necessary building blocks on which other rights are based.

Leverage family networks: Policymakers understand family networks as driving forces for mobility and integration and should make it easier for relatives to support one another. This can be done through expanding family reunification, creating additional pathways through private/community sponsorship, and facilitating remittances.

Tap into professional expertise: Policymakers and practitioners should view professional experience and training as assets for displaced persons, and should enable them to make use of their skills to earn a living and rebuild their lives. Efforts should include making the skills of displaced persons visible and accessible to employers at the national, regional, and international levels by, for instance, setting up systems for assessing displaced persons' skills and matching them with employers. This also means allowing national and transnational mobility so that those with in-demand skillsets can follow the job opportunities.

Strengthen human capital: Donors and policymakers should promote education and apprenticeship opportunities that can open new doors to sustainable futures, in both first countries of asylum and third countries.

Build social capital: Policies and programmes can help displaced persons to build their social capital through sponsorship, mentoring, and other initiatives that foster networking.

Allow return: Receiving countries should allow for temporary return, without negative repercussions for the status of international protection beneficiaries, so that displaced persons can maintain contacts, secure assets, and tap into resources in their place of origin.

Promising practices



- Livelihoods interventions such as [Dignity Kwanza's](#) “business pairs” project in Tanzania provide training that strengthens refugees’ human capital and helps them leverage this to earn a livelihood.
- Complementary pathways provide an opportunity for displaced persons to develop or utilise their skills through migration channels for study or work and to leverage their family networks through family reunification. These include the [Global Platform for Syrian Students](#), [University Corridors for Refugees](#), and [Talent Beyond Boundaries](#), as well as Canada’s Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot (alongside the corresponding feasibility study) and [private sponsorship](#) programme.
- [Skills-based relocation](#) can enable forced migrants already in the EU to go where the job opportunities are and build a sustainable future in Europe.
- [Refugee resettlement](#) can provide third-country solutions for those most at risk, helping them to find a truly durable solution.
- Initiatives to recognise the skills of refugees and make these skills visible to potential employers is a prerequisite for enabling refugees to fully utilise their skillset in destination countries, benefiting both receiving labour markets and the refugees themselves. Such efforts include the [EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals](#), the [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees](#), the Bertelsmann Foundation [Competence Cards](#), and various national competence checks.

TAKEAWAY 3

PROTECTION IS NOT
JUST ABOUT
PHYSICAL SAFETY
& SECURITY-
IT IS ALSO ABOUT
SUSTAINABLE FUTURES



What do we mean?

Public debate tends to concentrate on the physical protection of forced migrants fleeing persecution or war ([see Takeaway 2](#)). In this narrative, too little attention is paid to the equally important need for them to build a sustainable future. Physical protection cannot be sustainable without guaranteed rights, access to work and education, the possibility to reunite with family, and other factors that ensure that displaced persons are truly part of their new communities. Governance frameworks for responding to displacement centre on the primary objective of providing protection – yet physical protection in itself is only the first step towards a durable solution. It is fundamental for building a new life, but it is only one piece of the puzzle. The risk of marginalisation remains even for those who receive physical protection.

“People travel around Europe without documents to find a job. But if they move around... they are forever undocumented. Without documents, you will never be able to return to your country, which is the most important thing for me!”

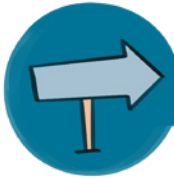
--Senegalese man, 24, interviewed in Bra, Italy



What did TRAFIG find?

Physical protection but no future. There are various reasons why displaced persons cannot access services to rebuild their lives. According to the [TRAFIG survey](#), a majority of Afghans in Pakistan (94% of the 299 migrants interviewed) are registered with either a special proof of registration (PoR) card or an Afghan citizen card (ACC). Registration in [Pakistan](#) provides protection from return, but no other rights are officially connected with it. A high percentage of Syrians in Jordan are registered with the government or UNHCR. While those [living in camps](#) may have better access to aid, access to work is scarce. Syrians outside of camps have less access to aid but more chances to find (mainly informal) employment. Overall, however, Syrian refugees in [Jordan](#) indicated that they lack accurate information, cannot access service providers, and/or are not eligible for support. However, even if the displaced person’s status grants them access to the labour market, this does not automatically translate into employment opportunities that would enable them to afford the costs of living. Meanwhile, research in [Greece](#) has shown that refugees, once recognised, lose reception support at the same time that they remain without employment because of a lack of employment opportunities and other barriers.

The lack of material protection is the most common reason why displaced persons (wish to) move on. Of the approximately 1,000 displaced persons interviewed in the DRC, Ethiopia, Greece, Italy, Jordan, and Pakistan, 70% reported that their economic situation is not satisfactory and constitutes the main reason for wishing to move on to another place or country. The expectation of better access to education (important for 38% of interviewees) and health care (22%) are also of importance. Higher security (38%) and family reunification (22%) were also important elements noted. The high importance of the economic situation is not surprising, as 70% of the respondents do not have the right to work in their current place of refuge. The lack of work permits is particularly high in Ethiopia (where none of those interviewed held such a permit), Pakistan (98%), and Jordan (66%).



What are the implications?

Protection from physical harm is undoubtedly the main reason why forcibly displaced persons leave their place of origin or residence. Providing displaced persons with protection from war, persecution, deprivation, or other forms of harm, through providing a safe place and basic needs, aims at satisfying immediate needs. However, by itself, this is not sufficient in the longer term. Displaced persons need to be in a position to build a new, sustainable future. Host countries, and the donors supporting them, must create enabling frameworks for refugees to rebuild their lives. Why? Because without an enabling framework, the exclusion and marginalisation of refugees leads to irregularity, exploitation, and social tensions. Ultimately, it also influences aspirations to move on to countries seen as providing a better future, even by way of dangerous journeys. Onward movement is largely not a deliberate choice of displaced persons, as often portrayed by EU political elites or the media, but rather a survival strategy employed in the absence of any basis on which to build a new life in their initial location.

"The majority of Afghans in Peshawar and Pakistan are young people; these young adults are looking for certainty in the future—whether in Afghanistan or Pakistan."

--Academic expert on Afghanistan, 60+, interviewed in Pakistan

Policy recommendations



Provide protection and solutions: Acknowledge that protection alone is not a solution if people have no legal or de facto ability to build a future.

Create an enabling environment: Host countries should develop measures that prevent dependency, discrimination, and exploitation, including through a legal status that offers stability and the right to work, hold a bank account, and independently access finance, as well as the ability to live outside of camps without losing support.

Improve economic prospects: Host countries should understand the potential of refugee contributions to local economies and actively facilitate their labour market integration through skills assessment and development as well as the inclusion of host communities in regional job creation initiatives.

Promote social inclusion: Host countries must increase efforts to combat exclusion, segregation, and marginalisation through anti-discrimination actions.

Use conditionality and ensure non-discrimination: Donors should make humanitarian assistance, development aid, and regional protection support for major refugee-hosting countries contingent on access to legal status for refugees that is paired with civil documentation and access to lawful work and secondary and tertiary education. Funding should target central governments but also the municipalities and communities that play the largest role in refugee integration.

Do not preclude asylum: While stepping up support for host countries, the EU and its Member States must ensure the right to seek and access asylum in the EU.

Allow more naturalisation: Receiving governments should develop more favourable naturalisation policies for refugees so as to provide them with a stable legal status and future in the country.

Promising practices



- Organisations such as [SHARP](#) (Pakistan) provide legal aid to refugees, helping them to obtain the legal status and services needed to stay in country securely and rebuild their lives.
- Livelihood interventions, such as training programmes, [joint refugee-local business ventures](#), and job creation activities, can help refugees become self-reliant.
- [‘One-stop-shops’](#) co-locate multiple services under one roof to offer integration supports that boost newcomer inclusion and reduce the risk of marginalisation.
- Comprehensive integration supports can boost newcomer inclusion and reduce the risk of marginalisation.

TAKEAWAY 4

KEEPING PEOPLE
CONNECTED
CAN UNLOCK
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR DISPLACED PERSONS



What do we mean?

Just like everyone else, displaced persons are embedded in a range of networks, and ignoring them gives an incomplete picture of displacement. Networks are part of the social capital that people have at the local, national, and/or transnational level. These networks include family members or friends living abroad, diaspora communities, and professional connections in other cities and countries. With limited access to formal support, personal networks emerge as the key source of information, emotional support, and financial resources for displaced persons. Yet, displacement disrupts both the quality and quantity of such networks, making many dependent upon state or international support and more likely to live in protracted displacement. International, national, and local organisations also have an important role to play in building and strengthening displaced persons' networks.

"When I first arrived, I asked my Facebook friends: 'Do we know anyone in Freiburg?' A friend knew a friend who knew a friend who told me, 'Yes, we do know some Syrians there.' So, they put me in touch... and he offered me a room for a week. So I told him, 'Okay, I can help you with your German as long as you give me a place for a week until I find a place of my own!'"

--Syrian man, 20-29, interviewed in Germany



What did TRAFIG find?

TRAFIG research in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe showed that **displaced persons rely first and foremost on their own human, social, and financial capital to build a more secure future.**

Family connections play a significant role in the initial decision to move. Social relationships matter decisively in trajectories of displacement. TRAFIG interviews showed that mobility decisions are rarely taken in isolation but rather in consultation with, and often dependent on, relatives or friends in various places. People fleeing to [Pakistan](#) and within the [DRC](#), for instance, first went to destinations where they had solid family contacts. TRAFIG interviews illustrated how, in [Germany](#), family connections not only facilitate mobility but are also crucial for integration. Conversely, separation from close family or personal networks often poses additional hardship for forced migrants settling into a new environment.

The quality of personal networks, rather than quantity, is critical in shaping the support they can provide. Research in the [DRC](#) showed that having a smaller number of connections with more powerful or better-integrated contacts was often more helpful than having a higher number of connections with people in an equally vulnerable position. Findings from Africa and [southern Europe](#) also highlighted the crucial role played by organisations, including religious and civil society groups, that may step in to provide support networks.

At the local level, good refugee-host relations set the stage for successful network building. In [Jordan](#), an initiative bringing refugees and host communities together for religious and youth arts courses opened doors to new connections. Local networking is also key to unlocking livelihood opportunities. TRAFIG research in [Ethiopia](#) showed that networks are critical for accessing livelihood opportunities available in cities. They are also essential for moving to the city from the camps in the first place: For those with contacts who can connect new arrivals to urban social and economic networks, the camps may serve more as a point of transit than anything else.

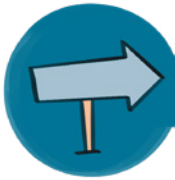
Transnational and local connections can also support displaced entrepreneurs in launching businesses, facilitating access to information, capital, and other key resources, while also providing a customer base. For instance, in [Ethiopia](#), refugee-local business ventures create and leverage positive refugee-local relationships, while benefitting both groups ([see Takeaway 7](#)).

Diasporas across the world can be an important player in refugee networking. The scope and reach of displaced persons' transnational networks is far greater than commonly expected (see TRAFIG [network maps](#)). Support from diaspora members can take the form of development assistance, investment, or microfinance, for instance, while diaspora members can also provide a market for refugee businesses, as seen in [Tanzania](#). Additionally, diasporas can provide a network to sponsor the mobility of refugees to another country through community and private sponsorship initiatives, as in [Germany](#), and can also support their subsequent integration ([see Takeaway 5](#)).

While playing a vital role, personal networks can also lead to dependencies and exploitation. TRAFIG research in [Italy and Greece](#) provided evidence of how family and co-ethnic networks may also be experienced as disabling, hampering one's aspirations to move out of protracted displacement. In [Pakistan](#), women experience legal disadvantages in matrimonial relationships. Additionally, the risk of fraud and exploitation, with limited options for seeking redress, was observed for joint business ventures in which refugees needed to rely on locals to obtain a business licence in [Jordan](#), [Tanzania](#), and [Ethiopia](#).

"Thanks to God, I also have cousins in Sudan, Canada, and the US who support my survival and pay my kids' school fees."

--Eritrean man, 30-39, interviewed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



What are the implications?

Refugees are far better internationally connected than is widely assumed. In the search for solutions, refugees seek to tap into their networks within and across countries. Policymakers and practitioners, including humanitarian agencies and individual supporters, can play an important role in helping displaced persons to build and strengthen their networks. Receiving countries, alongside development and humanitarian actors, should embrace such networks as a multiplier for solutions and work to help refugees build up both formal and informal connections. Networks in receiving countries, however, also require corresponding structures in key countries of first asylum, where refugees can connect, for instance, to learn about education and employment opportunities and navigate the required bureaucracy.

Policy recommendations



Strengthen refugee connections: Programmes should support refugees in maintaining and expanding their networks, whether they be formal or informal, personal or institutional – and local, national, or transnational.

Foster positive and regular intergroup interaction: A balanced narrative around migration should be promoted, as should engaging both refugees and locals in joint business ventures and other activities.

Tap into family networks: Policymakers should leverage transnational family networks to improve refugee protection. Receiving states should, early on in the process, inform refugees about available options for family reunification and this channel should be faster, broader, and more transparent. Alternative safe pathways should be initiated for family members who cannot benefit from family reunification, such as private/community sponsorship.

Encourage remittances: Relatives and diasporas should be encouraged to increase access to start-up capital and help displaced persons in both origin countries (IDPs) and countries of asylum (refugees).

Engage the diaspora: Policymakers should also look to diaspora communities to help ramp up the response to protracted displacement. They can help build connections among diaspora members and organisations and across diasporas, as well as between diasporas and development agencies, to create networks for sharing ideas, strengthening coordination, identifying business opportunities, and building capacity for collective activities that can scale up support.

Leverage the potential of associations and networks to create more job opportunities for refugees and IDPs: Governments should grant refugees the right to work and own a business, open a bank account, access finance, and live outside of camps.

Promote entrepreneurship: Stakeholders should see entrepreneurship as part of a multipronged livelihood strategy, and one in which networking plays a key role, for instance, through collective and joint businesses as well as trainings and business incubators. Encouraging microcredit schemes or other types of assistance not only helps refugees and IDPs to access the capital often needed to start a small business, it also encourages the emergence of these types of network-based support mechanisms.

Promising practices



- [The Mercy Corps initiative](#) to build a new girls school in Jordan's Zaatari village brought together refugees and host community students.
- The "business pairs" project implemented by [DIGNITY Kwanza](#) in Tanzania provided business skills training for refugees and host community members alike. After the training, the participants were asked to form refugee-local pairs and then assigned the task of creating a joint business plan. Twenty-five pairs joined a competition in which the eight best plans were awarded two million Tanzanian shillings (about €800) to kickstart their small business.
- The [European Resettlement Network](#) was launched in 2010 as a cooperation effort from ICMC Europe, IOM, and UNHCR. The Network has supported the development of resettlement in Europe and, more recently, other legal pathways of admission, by connecting a variety of actors involved in refugee resettlement.
- Germany's [Humanitarian Admission Programmes](#), set up in 2012 in collaboration with UNHCR, includes the [German resettlement programme](#) and three different admission programmes for especially vulnerable Syrian refugees.
- Several initiatives are supporting refugee entrepreneurs through mentorship, business incubator, and networking programmes, including [Startups Without Borders](#) (global), [The Refugee Entrepreneurship Network](#) (global), [New Roots program](#) (UK & Germany), [African Entrepreneur Collective](#) (East Africa), [The Entrepreneurial Refugee Network](#) (UK), [UNHCR business incubator](#) (Ecuador), and [Startup Refugees](#) (Finland).
- [NETWORK Companies Integrate Refugees](#) supports German companies that employ refugees or want to partake in voluntary work by creating a platform where they can find information, share experiences, and join events. It is implemented by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), with funding from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

TAKEAWAY 5

RATHER THAN
A PROBLEM,
MOBILITY CAN BE
PART OF THE
SOLUTION



What do we mean?

Mobility after initial displacement is the norm, not the exception. These movements come in many forms: They may be shorter in distance, such as from a camp to a nearby town or city, or may even be intercontinental. They may also be short visits, temporary, seasonal, or longer term, and may be circular or linear. As protection is tied to a particular place (camp, region, country, etc.), policies often restrict the right to mobility, impeding integration and keeping displaced persons from planning for their future. While the idea of ‘protracted’ displacement conjures up the image of being ‘stuck’ in displacement, mobility is important to understand in this context.

“Officially, I live in Malakasa camp now. But in reality, I live in an apartment in Athens, because in Malakasa things are difficult, there are fights every night... Malakasa is close to my work, but I don't like the situation there. I prefer staying in Athens, even if I have to travel every day to work.”

--Afghan man, interviewed in Athens, Greece



What did TRAFIG find?

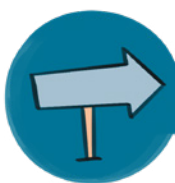
Mobility enables many displaced persons to pursue opportunities that they cannot find locally. It can help displaced persons to maintain and leverage their networks ([see Takeaway 4](#)), utilise their skills and resources ([see Takeaway 2](#)), and contribute to local communities ([see Takeaway 7](#)). Illustrative of this phenomenon, the [TRAFIG survey](#) showed a high degree of internal mobility and a frequent desire to move onward again in many countries, as well as considerable long-distance mobility and returns in some countries. Movements may be short distance: In [Greece](#), forced migrants move repeatedly between reception sites and nearby cities to obtain medical, legal, or other assistance and purchase basic necessities. For some, moving out of camps to live in urban areas elsewhere in the country is key to opening up prospects: Refugees in [Ethiopia](#) and [Tanzania](#) have moved to large cities in pursuit of employment, drawn by the larger number of (often informal) opportunities there. Similarly, refugees in [Jordan and Pakistan](#) move from camps to cities to seek employment and better living conditions and join their networks. Others opt for longer-range movement, travelling

across countries or even continents. In the absence of durable solutions in [Pakistan](#), Afghans move on to other countries farther afield, such as European countries. In a similar vein, asylum seekers and refugees who make it to [Greece and Italy](#) may decide to move on to another EU country in the hope of finding better access to asylum and services as well as long-term prospects and/or to reconnect with their families.

Return is not always a one-way street. In the [DRC](#), IDPs may travel back and forth to their origin community to leverage resources they still have there to help them sustain themselves and earn a living, for example, by selling these goods in urban markets (see [Takeaway 6](#)). In [Tanzania](#), refugees may move back and forth between the city and the camps to access education and job opportunities and find safety in the anonymity of the city, or free education and fewer daily challenges than faced in camps. For [Afghans](#) living in Pakistan, short-term visits enable them to stay connected with family remaining in Afghanistan (or whom have returned to the country), attending weddings, funerals, or other occasions; others may have chosen to return but found this to be unsustainable and ultimately remigrated to Pakistan.

Mobility can come with downsides. Those opting to leave refugee camps, for instance in [Ethiopia](#), are often expected to be self-reliant and may forfeit support. Having moved to the city, many [Congolese IDPs](#) moved several times within Bukavu due to difficulties locating stable, long-term housing. Each time they moved, they needed to make new acquaintances in their neighbourhood to rebuild their networks. TRAFIG research in [Greece and Italy](#) underscored that mobility, whether the move is shorter (e.g. within the country) or longer (e.g. to another EU country), can help people overcome protracted displacement. Conversely, it can in some cases prolong the state of precarity endured – with mobility restrictions a key factor compelling displaced persons to move irregularly and spurring frequently long-lasting marginalisation, including precarious and often exploitative labour conditions.

Networks play a key role in enabling mobility. For many [Syrians](#), networks (often opposition political groups) were instrumental in getting to Jordan in the first place, while under the (now ended) *kafala* or ‘sponsorship’ programme, they were required to provide a Jordanian sponsor or legal guardian in order to live outside a camp. Transnational contacts may help facilitate work contracts and visas to land a job in a Gulf country, or might shape aspirations to move on (in regard to whether, where, and when to go). In Ethiopia, [Eritreans](#) who were better connected and had more resources tended to leave the camps sooner. For those wishing to engage in (irregular) secondary migration, networks and resources were critical – for instance, to hire a smuggler. Some Syrians interviewed in [Germany](#) were able to utilise federal and state Humanitarian Admissions Pathways and other family reunification channels to safely bring family members living elsewhere to the country – although the majority arrived irregularly, due to a lack of legal options.



What are the implications?

Local, national, and transnational restrictions on mobility, including policies confining refugees to camps or other reception facilities, serve to limit displaced persons’ abilities to find ‘durable solutions’ (see [Takeaway 1](#)). Those who opt to leave camps or reception facilities often risk losing critical aid, which in many cases does not reach them in the city. These restrictions and the dearth of support for those who leave the official reception places, and the lack of options for legal migration to other countries, often serve to prolong rather than resolve marginalisation. Many people will move anyway, despite all the barriers they face, to improve their prospects of rebuilding. Mobility should be allowed and seen as part of the solution, and support should be available wherever displaced persons are located, whether it be a camp or otherwise. Displaced persons move beyond these confines and so too should aid. Outward mobility should be supported more effectively by policies and programmes, so that it can lead to increased upward mobility.

Policy recommendations



Permit freedom of movement: For refugees, receiving countries should allow movement within host countries and circular mobility to and from origin countries for livelihood and networking purposes. For IDPs, governments should enable mobility to and from communities of origin by improving infrastructure and security conditions along the road network.

Do not confine displaced persons: Governments should enable displaced persons to live outside of camps and reception centres – without the need for a sponsor – and support them wherever they are, in cooperation with humanitarian, development, and integration actors.

Enable voluntary return: Host countries and the international community must ensure that the return of displaced persons to their place of origin is voluntary. Additionally, temporary returns should be allowed so that refugees can maintain their networks and tap into their resources without jeopardising their legal status as refugees.

Facilitate local mobility: Local and regional governments, with outside assistance as necessary, should strengthen transportation infrastructure between camps/centres and cities.

Expand third-country opportunities: The EU and third countries should increase the level of opportunities for resettlement, family reunification, work, and study, thereby enabling more displaced persons to find long-term solutions. These should include quicker, more benevolent, and less bureaucratic family reunification procedures, as well as a sizable and stable quota for resettlement.

Leverage networks to expand legal pathways: Family reunification and humanitarian admission programmes that entail a private sponsorship element tap into refugees' own networks to facilitate mobility and integration, while community sponsorship creates new support networks. Both should be expanded.

Promising practices



- Under Ethiopia's [Urban Assistance Programme](#), refugees of any nationality with special protection and health needs can live outside of camps and receive aid from UNHCR. Ethiopia has also been relaxing its out-of-camp policy to allow more refugees to live outside of camps.
- [Pakistan](#) is among the host countries allowing refugees to live outside of camps, enabling them to join their networks, look for work, or otherwise improve their living conditions – even though many still face barriers to their mobility within the country.
- Refugees from Ukraine, who were already able to [travel visa-free](#) to the EU and were granted temporary protection following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War, are able to choose the Member State in which they would like to settle, enabling them to join up with their networks.
- National [refugee resettlement programmes](#) offer a pathway for refugees to move to a third country, receive integration assistance, and eventually obtain permanent residence in that country. [Community sponsorship](#) schemes can tap into volunteer support to add on to resettlement programmes, creating additional places for refugees.

- Matching the skills of refugees with the needs of employers, and enabling refugees to move to take up these jobs, can help displaced persons to leverage their experience to earn a livelihood. [Talent Beyond Boundaries](#) helps match refugees and employers through its Talent Catalog, helping refugees find work opportunities in Europe, North America, and Australia.
- [Skills-based relocation](#) can enable refugees already in the EU to move to another EU country by matching their professional experience with employer demand and facilitating mobility accordingly.
- Other complementary pathways for work, such as the Institute of International Education's [Scholar Rescue Fund](#), can also open up new professional opportunities for refugees.
- Family reunification programmes and private/community sponsorship schemes that enable the sponsor to name those who they wish to bring, [such as those in Germany](#), can tap into family networks to increase the number of third-country opportunities for refugees.
- Pathways for international study, such as Italy's [University Corridors for Refugees](#) and Canada's [Student Refugee Program](#), can help refugees access higher education and transition to a high-paying job.

TAKEAWAY 6

IDPs REQUIRE MORE ATTENTION & OFFER VALUABLE LESSONS FOR HELPING REFUGEES



What do we mean?

The majority of displaced persons worldwide do not cross an international border. However, while the number of IDPs is high, they are frequently overlooked as a group. IDPs remain within their country – often without support, because their government cannot, or will not, afford them the protection they should, while international actors are reluctant to step in. Consequently, IDPs often have to fend for themselves, and many turn to new and existing contacts for support in their quest to become self-reliant. Contacts and resources in communities of origin have proved a critical source of sustenance for those who can maintain these assets – and with the right interventions, these resources could also support refugees.

“To meet our expenses, I sometimes go back to my native village, to my parents' house, to look for cassava because our village is well known for the production of cassava... I also go to my in-laws to collect beans and sweet potatoes to feed my children.”

--Congolesse woman, 40, interviewed in Bukavu, DRC



What did TRAFIG find?

Many IDPs remain overlooked and underserved. TRAFIG research in [Bukavu](#), the capital of South Kivu province in eastern DRC, found that IDPs in urban areas are largely overlooked and unassisted by state and international humanitarian and development interventions. Even though Bukavu is a hub for international aid organisations, nearly all of the assistance provided occurred outside of the city – IDPs who reported receiving aid in Bukavu did so mainly in informal ways, through individuals or churches. Within the city, registration of arriving IDPs is inconsistent and often ad hoc, and IDPs do not always want to register. Representatives of the government and humanitarian organisations in the city often deny the presence of IDPs in Bukavu, and a lack of systematic registration means that they can often get away with this.

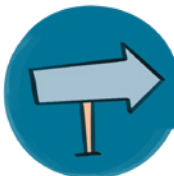
Due to a lack of assistance, urban IDPs depend on the solidarity of others to become self-reliant. Most IDPs coming to Bukavu seek out relatives, friends, business associates, or other contacts, believing that these connections will help them to find housing and employment and integrate into the community (see [Takeaway 4](#)). Family members are particularly important in this regard, and IDPs may have decided to move to the city in the first place because they had a relative there. Friends and even strangers may offer assistance, and churches also play a supportive role. While many IDPs have only a limited set of contacts upon arrival, one connection can offer an entry point to further connections that may provide assistance. Solidarity among fellow IDPs from the same community of origin, or whom they have met when they fled, also help an IDP strengthen their network once in the city. In other cases, strangers helped IDPs to find work, housing, or education.

While networks can help IDPs in locating a job or housing, IDPs still face many challenges and often find it difficult to truly overcome protracted displacement. Although networks constitute a significant source of support, for too many IDPs such assistance is only temporary or insufficient to truly overcome displacement. Many of those supporting IDPs, such as people hosting newly arrived relatives, are facing precarious situations themselves. There are also difficulties inherent in depending on the support of others that underline the limitations of these connections and informal arrangements. If a person providing support experiences a change in circumstances or passes away, this can have considerable repercussions for the IDP they are assisting and can even exacerbate their vulnerability. Moreover, there are limits to the generosity of ties, as well as a possible danger of exploitation (see [Takeaway 4](#)). Additionally, not every IDP has a network — or, for fear of stigmatisation, wants to utilise their network.

For many IDPs, networks of support reach to their home communities. Connections in communities of origin can be a significant source of support for IDPs, because they can help IDPs maintain and utilise assets. For instance, family members back home can cultivate land owned by their relative who was displaced to Bukavu and share the harvest with them. For IDPs who are able to maintain their connections and leverage their resources back home — and travel back and forth — these assets provide a source of sustenance and even income. This [livelihood strategy](#) highlights the critical role of mobility between origin and destination communities and the power of connections in the place of origin to provide support for displaced persons (see [Takeaway 5](#)).

“Since we arrived in Bukavu, we have never received any help from the state or from any organisation... we are not even members of a single association so far because we don't have enough money to pay the membership fee.”

--Congolesse man, 37, interviewed in Bukavu, DRC



What are the implications?

With protection often lacking in practice, IDPs in Bukavu have shown considerable capacity to fend for themselves. This is possible thanks to the relative ease with which they can travel back and forth, as well as access to tightly knit networks. The closer to home you stay, the easier it is to maintain and leverage your networks. Seeing what works for IDPs provides fodder for determining what may work for refugees. If targeted support is provided, for instance in maintaining networks and facilitating movement across borders if the security situation allows refugees (those who can and want to) to travel home occasionally without the risk of losing their refugee status, refugees might also tap into their resources. Still, not all connections and networks are of equal quality — informal connections are especially vulnerable to rupture, meaning that more formal support will be needed.

Policy recommendations



Pay more attention: The international community should increase its support for IDPs, especially those facing long-lasting situations of precarity, including those in urban areas.

Foster networking: Humanitarian and development actors and local authorities should help IDPs strengthen and leverage their existing networks and build new ones. They can bolster current networks of in/formal support, including host families, religious institutions, and labour associations; promote a balanced narrative on IDPs; and offer programmed activities that reach both IDPs and locals.

Support hosts: Aid interventions should support host families, who in many cases have themselves been displaced, to foster stability for new IDPs that can help them become self-reliant. More broadly, support for host communities can help prevent hostility towards IDPs and encourage hospitality.

Facilitate IDP mobility: Governments and development actors should support, and not impede, IDP mobility so that they can leverage resources in their communities of origin. This includes improving infrastructure and security conditions along the roads.

Analyse lessons for refugees: Donors can support researchers in studying in greater depth how IDP mobility to and from origin communities might offer lessons for refugees.

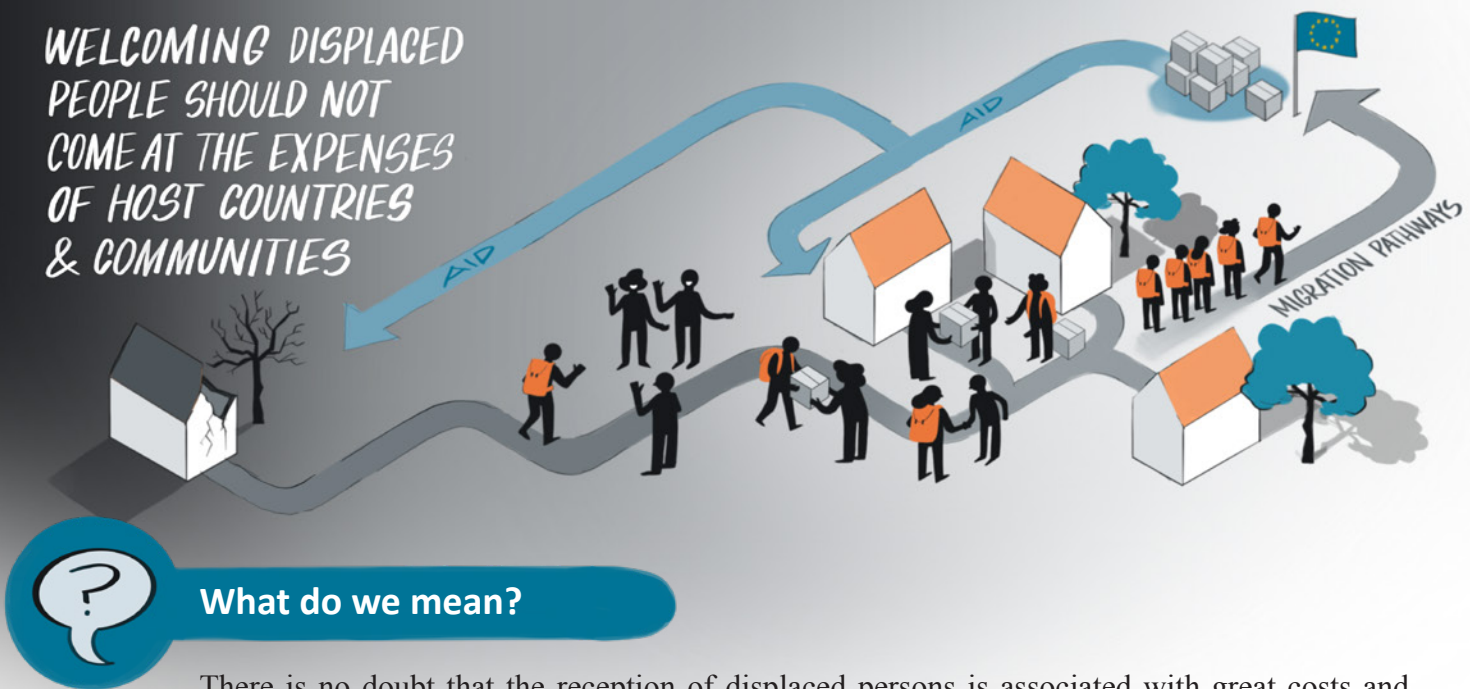
Promising practices



- [Loan and savings associations](#) can help IDPs enter the labour market – for instance, by helping them pay for labour association membership fees or providing start-up capital.
- Monetary assistance for host families can help them provide reception support for newcomers. Several European countries, for instance, are providing financial support for people hosting Ukrainians.
- [Churches](#) and other religious actors can be an important source of support for displaced persons that can also help to facilitate local integration.

TAKEAWAY 7

WELCOMING DISPLACED PEOPLE SHOULD NOT COME AT THE EXPENSES OF HOST COUNTRIES & COMMUNITIES



What do we mean?

There is no doubt that the reception of displaced persons is associated with great costs and sacrifice by receiving countries and communities. Major host countries, who often face difficult economic and political situations themselves (see [Takeaway 1](#)), rightly demand of the international community not only recognition of their contribution but also greater solidarity. The international community must assure that taking responsibility for receiving displaced persons is well-acknowledged and sufficiently supported through aid and financial contributions, as well as increased third-country opportunities (see [Takeaway 5](#)). Declarations to this effect by the international community must be followed up by measurable, concrete, and timely support. Such aid can also help to increase the political space for receiving countries (as well as local-level institutions and communities) to provide refugees with rights, including mobility, that enable them to capitalise on their skills and networks. This benefits displaced persons and their wider communities, which can contribute to more positive narratives about them and encourage governments to see local integration as a more viable – and desirable – solution.

“The Syrians have a positive impact, look around you, in each corner in this area you will see a shop, restaurant owned or operated by Syrians, and they improve its quality.”
--Syrian woman, 40-49, interviewed in Jordan



What did TRAFIG find?

Many refugees seek protection in neighbouring low- and middle-income countries and stay for years, if not decades. [Pakistan](#), for instance, has received Afghan refugees for over four decades, while the conflict in [Syria](#) has entered its second decade and continues to be a source of displacement. Many displaced persons cannot go home in the foreseeable future – and may not see return as an option. Refugee resettlement and other third-country solutions remain finite. This means that the vast majority of refugees stay in receiving countries in the region for years or even decades, unable to rebuild their lives in a meaningful way (see [Takeaway 3](#)).

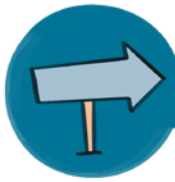
Protracted displacement situations are chronically underfunded by the international community. [Ethiopia](#)'s 2019 Refugee Proclamation, heralded as one of Africa's most

progressive refugee laws, contains some important promises that remain unfulfilled. Key informants indicate that the Ethiopian Government is not to blame for the lack of substantiation thus far, pointing out that international donors have not adequately funded programmes in the country due to competing concerns amid record global displacement and the shock of COVID-19. However, conflict in the Tigray region has additionally undermined recent advances. Overall, solidarity with major refugee-receiving countries, in the form of funding as well as pathways, is sorely needed.

The presence of large numbers of displaced persons profoundly impacts receiving communities. For instance, while IDPs are directly impacted by insecurity in eastern [DRC](#), residents of the city of Bukavu are indirectly affected: They share their scarce resources with newcomers and face challenges in accessing basic services, which can lead to a sense of competition and tensions between newer and longer term residents. In [Jordan](#), the arrival of one million Syrians has led to increased living costs, including for rent and consumer goods, affecting Syrians and Jordanians alike. Competition for scarce resources and jobs was cited by interviewees as a reason for intergroup conflict. [Pakistan](#) has experienced a shift away from the welcome extended to Afghans arriving in the 1980s to seeing them today as a burden, and once strong social cohesion has deteriorated. Tensions contribute to the already considerable precarity with which displaced persons contend. While they have received fewer forced migrants in comparison to the aforementioned states, significant numbers of asylum seekers have arrived in [Greece and Italy](#), and they can have a sizable impact locally. The continued strain on local services in Greece, for instance, has hurt public perceptions of forced migrants – especially on “hotspot” islands such as Lesbos. Responsibility sharing is not just a global challenge, but also a regional and local one. With this in mind, engaging and rewarding local authorities and communities for their active engagement in reception and integration can trigger win-win dynamics.

Third countries in Europe and elsewhere must offer a place of refuge for more of the world’s displaced (see [Takeaway 5](#)). Expanded family reunification channels can enable more displaced persons to tap into their transnational ties to find a solution to their predicament, while other complementary pathways allow displaced persons to make use of their social and human capital to work or study. Increasing refugee resettlement can help those most at risk to find a pathway to protection. Meanwhile, European responses to the 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine show that the EU has additional tools, including evacuation and temporary protection, that can be critical lifelines for those in origin and major host countries.

Displaced persons contribute to receiving economies and communities – and can do even more, if allowed (see [Takeaway 2](#)). [Syrians in Jordan](#) have injected new ideas into the food, service, hospitality, and interior décor sectors, while the emergency has brought well-paying [jobs for Jordanians](#) in international organisations and NGOs. Residents neighbouring Ethiopia’s Mai Tsebri camp overcame their opposition to the settlement and now report that their town has benefited greatly from the presence of the camp, especially after restrictions on mobility out of the camps were loosened. Entrepreneurs have moved into the area, setting up shops, hotels, bars, business centres, and internet cafes, while the presence of international aid workers has injected further revenue into the local economy. In [Pakistan](#), some Afghans may take up jobs that Pakistanis do not wish to do, while others have set up businesses, hiring both Afghans and Pakistanis. Afghan businesses may even produce and trade items [on both sides](#) of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. [Congolese IDPs](#) who are able to maintain their networks and resources in origin communities and travel back and forth from Bukavu sell their wares in the city’s markets, bringing greater diversity to the range of products available. When refugees are able to put their skills and other resources to use, they are able to contribute to the communities and countries in which they live. Greater international solidarity can help create the conditions for this by giving host governments more room for manoeuvre.



What are the implications?

The international community must ramp up support for displacement situations both old and new. It is critical that the level of aid offered be larger in scale and provided at an earlier stage. As a matter of course, countries and localities showing generosity in receiving refugees must be assured that the international community will support them in this endeavour. This international support should also be extended to wider receiving communities as part of a whole-of-community perspective, so that the presence of displaced persons does not inflame tensions and the often hidden local potential for inclusion is fully valorised. More intensive and inclusive financial assistance can incentivise countries to host refugees and to grant them rights that are not only important for finding a solution to displacement, but also to becoming active, contributing members of receiving communities and strengthening social cohesion. However, enhanced funding alone will not suffice: European and other high-income countries must take in larger numbers of displaced persons.

Policy recommendations



Less talk, more action: European donors should increase funding for refugee-receiving countries, and policymakers should expand channels for refugees to rebuild their lives in Europe.

Give funding to responsible stakeholders: Donors should provide additional humanitarian and development funding to receiving countries and local organisations, rather than concentrating so heavily on international organisations and international NGOs. Within the EU, funding for city governments should be direct and increased.

Build local capacity: International donors and NGOs should cooperate with local programmes and provide them with capacity building and financial support.

Help those in need: In addition to displaced persons, donors should also provide aid for host communities, in general, and those members who are most vulnerable, in particular.

Adopt a whole-of-community approach: Programming must not overlook locals in efforts such as job creation, and should provide services to the whole community as much as possible.

Lay the foundation for community cohesion: Host governments need to grant more rights to refugees, including the right of mobility, to enable them to earn a living and be active, contributing members of their new communities.

Show solidarity by admitting refugees: Third countries must use all possible tools to evacuate people in dire need of protection directly from countries of origin and first asylum, resettle the most vulnerable, and provide complementary pathways to increase access to durable solutions.

Foster transnational trade: Policymakers should allow refugees to sustain bilateral trade between countries of origin and destination, as this might have a long-lasting and positive impact on the economies of both countries.

Promising practices



- Projects that reach both displaced persons and locals, such as [joint business ventures](#) and [arts and religion courses](#), benefit both groups, facilitate inter-group interactions, and improve relations.
- Refugee resettlement, community sponsorship, and opportunities for work and study in third countries can increase the level of opportunities for refugees while demonstrating international solidarity with major hosting countries.
- Several European and North American countries [evacuated Afghans](#) directly from Afghanistan following the 2021 Taliban takeover, an important demonstration of taking responsibility for those at risk.
- In response to the fastest-growing displacement crisis in Europe since World War II, Canada has launched [an initiative](#) to fast track travel authorisation for Ukrainians, including the right to work and study.
- Acknowledging the central reception and integration role played by cities, the EU Commission designed the [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027](#), aimed at increasing recognition of and support to city-level initiatives. The Action Plan includes proposals to ensure easier access for cities to EU funding through increasing involvement in national programmes and specific national funding calls for cities.
- Engaging and rewarding local authorities and communities for their active participation in reception and integration efforts can be a win-win, as shown by several municipality-level promising practices in the framework of Italy's [Sistema Accoglienza e Integrazione](#).

TAKEAWAY 8

LEVERAGE VIRTUAL OPPORTUNITIES SO THAT DISPLACED PERSONS CAN STAY CONNECTED



What do we mean?

As the world we live in becomes ever more digital and connected, information and communication technology (ICT) can – and should – be an important resource in resolving displacement crises. Indeed, displaced persons are increasingly turning to digital solutions to maintain their social networks ([see Takeaway 4](#)), access services and information, seek job opportunities, and even create their own self-employment. Policymakers and practitioners should help more displaced persons to stay digitally connected to networks and opportunities.

"I had no idea that there are WhatsApp groups and Facebook posts that provide information about aid."

--Syrian man, 40-49, interviewed in Jordan



What did TRAFIG find?

ICT helps displaced persons keep in contact with family and friends back home and farther afield. Mobile phones and other forms of digital mobility allow displaced persons to transcend the limitations of their immediate environment, providing them with alternative ways to stay connected with their social networks and the world. Examples from [Pakistan](#), [Ethiopia](#), and [Jordan](#) show how displaced persons often rely on digital connectivity to maintain their relationships: 75% of displaced Afghans interviewed by TRAFIG researchers in [Pakistan](#) stated that they keep in contact with their ‘important persons’ this way. Likewise, displaced persons in [Tanzania](#) indicated that they regularly use Facebook to find family members living across the world.

Digital solutions can facilitate access to services and information. Research shows that displaced persons use ICT as the primary means of receiving information and accessing services as well as other types of logistical, emotional, and financial support. In [Jordan](#), for instance, social media has become an important source of information for refugees, and aid agencies are increasingly using digital means such as WhatsApp and SMS to disseminate information and contact refugees directly. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak, service provision for the general public has become more digital, due to health-related restrictions. Across [European reception systems](#), technology has provided increased opportunities

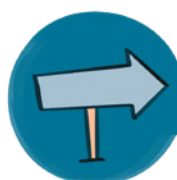
for residents to engage digitally, including by participating in integration activities and accessing medical care. However, such means are still not universally used or accessed. In the case of Syrian refugees based in Jordan, researchers observed a higher potential of social immobilisation of sorts in women with limited access to TV, internet, and mobile phones.

Access can also be hindered by national policies. This is the case in [Tanzania](#), where a recently introduced law established mandatory identification to obtain a SIM card, creating a substantial barrier to accessing the digital infrastructure and thus isolating and further disconnecting the most vulnerable.

Digital work creates new livelihood opportunities for displaced persons. Digital connectivity offers displaced persons easier access to platforms that they can use to generate income, including [through entrepreneurship](#) or mobile-based solutions for money transfer. Examples from TRAFIG research highlight the entrepreneurial skills that refugees can utilise when connected, even in a challenging environment. This proved to be especially relevant in cases where national policies actually impede refugees from engaging in self-employment, like in [Tanzania](#), where refugees are more dependent on mobile phones and social media platforms to earn an income. Such platforms are often utilised in addition to the physical marketplace, without requiring identification or a large investment, as is the [case](#) for female urban refugees in Dar es Salaam selling clothes, beauty accessories, and food items via WhatsApp, Instagram, or Facebook. Technology lowers the threshold for engaging in entrepreneurial activities and helps refugees to circumvent barriers to opening formal businesses or obstacles stemming from their lack of registered status or capital.

"I really depend on my phone because all my customers communicate with me through my mobile now... I have moved from Kurasini where my office was, and not all my customers know where they can get me."

--Congoese woman, 50+, interviewed in Tabata Shule, Tanzania



What are the implications?

Connectivity is an indispensable tool for overcoming protracted displacement: Those who are better connected are more likely to access, or even create, livelihood opportunities. Digital tools provide a powerful way of staying connected – to people and to opportunities. National policies, as well as bureaucratic and administrative procedures at the local level, prove to be essential in either enabling or hindering such opportunities by facilitating or curtailing access to basic digital infrastructure, and thus allow people to stay connected ([see Takeaway 4](#)) and mobile ([see Takeaway 5](#)).

Policy recommendations



See technology as an enabler: Digital networks and opportunities are part of the solution, but should not be interpreted as a way to replace mobility.

Enable access to digital tools: Donors and receiving governments should invest in ICT infrastructure and ensure that displaced persons remain connected and well-informed, including through activities to promote digital literacy.

Raise awareness: Governments and humanitarian actors should ensure that relevant resources remain accurate, up-to-date, and easily reachable by informing displaced persons about available digital tools and how to access them.

Acknowledge the potential: The potential of digital livelihood tools should be harnessed by supporting displaced persons' access to income-generating activities and offering training, mentoring, and loans that can help them maximise income opportunities.

Encourage private sector involvement: Policymakers and donors should clear the way for partnerships with civil society and private investors and implementers to help displaced persons harness digital opportunities and circumvent formal and informal barriers in host countries.

Assess and mitigate risks: The use of technology in humanitarian settings always comes with downsides. While ensuring digital access, governments and donors should develop proper legal frameworks for governing such solutions and ensuring data protection and privacy.

Promising practices



- Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of virtual initiatives were implemented at European reception facilities to allow services to continue despite government restrictions. For example, in Italy, integration-related services such as [language courses](#) were moved to an online setting.
- Microfinance initiatives such as loans provided through [Kiva's World Refugee Fund](#) show that ICT can link refugees with international crowdfunding opportunities that support their enterprises financially.
- [SHARP](#) has been communicating with Afghan elders and community leaders in Pakistan via WhatsApp and telephone – particularly important channels for sharing information during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also created a website to make information available for Afghans seeking to find legal, livelihood, housing, and education support.
- The European Commission has created a [central webpage](#) for Ukrainians looking to come to (or whom are already in) the EU. Available in Ukrainian, Russian, and English, this resource offers information on rights, applying for temporary protection, moving within the EU, and which national agencies and NGOs are assisting newcomers.
- [Teach Digital](#) teaches digital skills to migrant women with the aim of supporting their professional and personal development and increasing their participation and employment prospects, while the [RIDE](#) Project provides reskilling and upskilling trainings to boost migrant and refugee women's access to job opportunities in the digital labour market.
- The [ICT4TCN](#) project aims to leverage the IT skills migrants already possess to meet labour needs in EU labour markets by tapping into and further developing their skillsets through bootcamps, networking, and other activities.
- [Techfugees'](#) “TF4Women programme” helps refugee women to get (back) into employment in the technology sector through the sharing of practical knowledge alongside one-on-one mentoring.

TAKEAWAY 9

NOTHING ABOUT DISPLACED PERSONS WITHOUT DISPLACED PERSONS



What do we mean?

Displaced persons themselves are an indispensable resource for finding durable solutions for their own displacement – and that of other displaced persons. Yet, their expertise is not heard often enough. Refugee- and migrant-led organisations often play an important role on the ground, and understand community experiences and needs, but are seldom part of policy discussions. Policies and services must be systematically informed by displaced persons – from their design through to implementation and evaluation.

“I have no intention to leave Jordan. I want to stay here... I have been approached by a young man and a woman from UNHCR to apply for resettlement in a Western country, but I refused because I'm very comfortable living in Jordan; especially because I lived in Jordan for a while before the crisis.”

--Syrian woman, 40-49, interviewed in Jordan



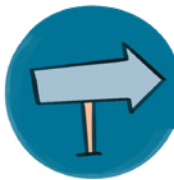
What did TRAFIG find?

Across the countries studied, the individual situations of displaced persons, including their networks (see [Takeaway 4](#)) and skills (see [Takeaway 2](#)), are typically not considered in the policies affecting them. All too often, policies construe refugees as passive recipients of aid and their agency as a threat that needs to be controlled instead of viewing it as a resource. This means that, far too often, displaced persons are not able to leverage the [social and human capital they possess](#) to find sustainable solutions. For instance, displaced persons may wish to [reunite with family members](#) in Europe and elsewhere, but find themselves [unable to do so](#) due to strict migration policies (see [Takeaway 5](#)). Forced migrants in [Greece and Italy](#) may wish to move out of reception centres or onward to other EU countries to join up with their networks, earn a living, and improve their circumstances – but if they do, they put their asylum procedure or legal status at risk, exacerbating their vulnerability. The voices of displaced persons must be heard so that policies better reflect their experiences.

Some efforts are being taken to ensure that displaced persons have a seat at the table – but more places are needed. In [Jordan](#)'s Za'atari camp, for instance, tribal councils have been established to mediate between refugees and camp authorities. More broadly, UNHCR is holding regional- and national-level refugee consultations, while the Urban Agenda for the

EU Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees established the European Migrant Advisory Board to increase refugee participation in policies affecting them. However, while displaced persons bring with them valuable knowledge stemming from their lived experiences, efforts to seek (and incorporate) their insights are inconsistent. Even in cases where their input is sought, it is not always done in a meaningful way. Lived experience must be seen – and sought out – as valuable expertise.

Participation must encompass the diversity that exists across and within refugee and IDP groups. What works for one displaced person may not work for another. The [TRAFIG survey](#) revealed that the intention to resettle/relocate, move on, or return varies considerably depending on a range of factors, including the geographic origin of displaced persons and where they currently live, as well as their age, marital status, and protection status. Additionally, researchers found that the wishes of [Afghans in Pakistan](#) often differ by generation and social class: Those who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s typically wanted to stay in Pakistan, while educated members of this group, typically second and third generation migrants, often aspired to move outside of the region. Tailormade solutions are needed, which take into account the preferences, backgrounds, needs, and respective potentials of different displaced individuals.



What are the implications?

The participation of displaced persons in the design, implementation, and assessment of policies and programmes must be systematic and meaningful. Participation should span the range of policies affecting displaced persons, including safe pathways, integration, questions of return, diaspora engagement, and governance. This can be done through employing a mix of dialogue, partnership, capacity building, and financial support. Thoughtful approaches to participation are needed from the local to the global level. Such efforts are not just about seeking input from displaced communities – it is also critical that displaced communities have spaces in which to discuss issues among themselves.

Policy recommendations



See displaced persons as partners: Policymakers and practitioners must see displaced people as partners, not only beneficiaries. Acknowledging the expertise held by displaced persons is a precondition for meaningful engagement.

Incorporate displaced persons' perspectives: Policymakers and the international community should foster the participation of displaced persons, as well as broader diasporas, in conversations about integration, return, and third-country solutions.

Make participation systematic: Policymakers must systematically include refugee voices in aid governance, local decision-making, and other key areas, so that they can provide input on policies and programmes that affect them. This could take the form of regular consultations, for instance, or the use of advisory boards (refugee- or migrant-specific boards or inclusion of these populations on 'mainstream' advisory boards like city councils).

Support refugee-led efforts: International organisations, donors, and governments of all levels should assist refugee-led organisations in providing support networks and holding discussions within and across communities of displaced persons.

Boost engagement capacity: Donors and governments should allocate funding for training, capacity building, and knowledge exchange activities for refugee-, migrant-, and diaspora-led groups, especially for newer/less represented communities.

Broaden engagement: Stakeholders should include, but also go beyond, the ‘usual suspects’ to diversify the engagement of displaced persons in informing policies and programmes affecting these diverse communities.

Co-design services: Local governments and programmes can partner with refugees to co-design services and spaces, such as those related to integration, thereby helping to ensure that such offerings are provided in a relevant and effective way.

Remember the limitations: Many refugees and diaspora members want to take an active role in discussions, and those seeking their engagement should provide appropriate funding to compensate refugees for their engagement and enable those with fewer resources to participate.

Promising practices



- The [Global Refugee-Led Network](#), [New Women Connectors](#), the United States [Refugee Congress](#), and other refugee- and migrant-led networks are initiatives spearheaded by displaced persons and diaspora members to amplify their voice and policy impact.
- International, national, and local governments have created refugee and migrant advisory bodies, such as the [European Migrant Advisory Board](#), Germany’s [Advisory Board on Integration and Migration](#), and New South Wales, Australia’s [Refugee Youth Policy Initiative](#), to increase migrants’ political participation and better address community needs.
- Storytelling initiatives such as [1000 Dreams](#), [Refugee Storytellers Collective](#), and [Living Libraries](#) can help raise awareness on the experiences of displaced persons.
- The [participatory budget](#) approach employed in Grenoble, France enables city residents of all nationalities to propose and vote on projects.
- The [MIICT](#) project, which supports integration by providing access to key information and services via ICT, is rooted in the concepts of co-creation and co-design with intended users, refugees and migrants.

TAKEAWAY 10

WORK ACROSS
POLICY SILOS
TO ENSURE THAT
THE SUM
IS GREATER
THAN ITS PARTS



What do we mean?

Displacement has traditionally been seen as an emergency matter, to be dealt with by humanitarian actors. However, as the level of (protracted) displacement continues to grow, the role of other players – such as development organisations, local governments, diaspora communities, and the private sector – has become ever more crucial to finding sustainable solutions. With so many stakeholders potentially involved, working across different policy areas becomes increasingly urgent: Whereas synergies support both displaced persons and receiving countries, a lack of coordination is counterproductive.

“Our mandate is to protect and secure refugees... It would also be part of our mandate to work with IDPs but we don't get any means for this from the international community so we cannot do anything.”

--Policy maker interviewed in Bukavu, DRC



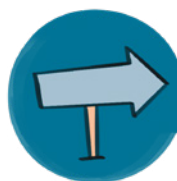
What did TRAFIG find?

Dialogue and coordination among the actors involved at all levels is crucial to ensuring that each has a part to play and that the overall effort is orchestrated. Otherwise, concerns over ownership and inclusion might arise. For instance, TRAFIG research in [the DRC](#) highlighted the existing gap between international and local actors, with local NGOs and government actors often feeling ignored by international actors, who are part of the same humanitarian cluster meetings. Likewise, fieldwork in [Greece](#) revealed that international humanitarian actors tend to sideline local or regional authorities and organisations, undermining their role and creating a sense of alienation among local populations ([see Takeaway 7](#)).

Local actors play a crucial role in finding and implementing solutions based on the real needs of displaced persons in their communities ([see Takeaway 4](#)). Although migration and asylum policy largely remain a national responsibility and actions to address protracted displacement are coordinated at the international level, integration takes place where the affected people are located and thus requires a multi-level governance approach that provides a seat at the table, and support, for local actors. This also means that funding opportunities must be extended and be made approachable for local governance structures like municipalities or local NGOs.

Working at the crossroads of different governance areas is key for developing more effective (and innovative) solutions. A good example of where synergies are critical is complementary pathways for refugees. While the policy areas of migration and asylum are traditionally divided, [complementary pathways](#) require policymakers to overcome such sectoral divides to allow refugees who stay in third countries to take up legal migration channels for work, study, or family reunification purposes ([see Takeaway 5](#)).

Networks are also needed to support such initiatives in Europe and in countries of first asylum – for instance, to identify displaced persons’ skills, educational aspirations, or family ties ([see Takeaway 4](#)). This can be done in cooperation with NGOs providing counselling for refugees on legal migratory opportunities. Policy and practice must therefore cut across the EU’s internal and external dimensions to realise the promise of complementary pathways.



What are the implications?

Establishing synergies and working towards a more comprehensive collaboration among the players involved can help policies and programmes to better address protracted displacement – and to reduce the risk that new displacement becomes long lasting. Clearly, networking is not only important for displaced persons, it is also vital for policymakers and practitioners. Greater cooperation and coordination can magnify impact and become more tailored to individual solutions if realised across policy and governance silos in an inclusive manner. This work is already underway, with landmark, but yet to prove impactful, global initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Global Compact on Refugees, the Global Compact for Migration, and work on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Policy recommendations



Bridge the divide: Policymakers should avoid sectoral governance approaches and fragmentation across different policy spheres by establishing cross-sectoral decision-making mechanisms and strategies, taking international, national, and local governance level actors into account.

Foster dialogue: International organisations and policymakers must create shared spaces where all actors involved can meet and collaborate.

All aboard: Bringing a greater number and range of actors into the fray is critical to expanding refugee support networks – and solutions.

Think local: National and international actors must ensure that local voices are heard and support local actors in accessing and participating in decision-making processes.

Invest in networking: In addition to supporting displaced persons’ networks, connections and partnerships among governments, IOs, NGOs, and private sector actors can enable better coordination, more joint action, and more effective information sharing and policy transfer to multiply the collective impact.

Include the diaspora: Policymakers should support networking within and across diaspora organisations and communities, as well as between diasporas and other stakeholders, to tap into their expertise and support.

Promising practices



- [The Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue](#) is a platform of African and European mayors working together to deliver innovative and practical solutions for human mobility in and between their cities.
- The [EU Global Diaspora Facility](#) (operated by ICMPD) works to consolidate diaspora engagement efforts through a multi-stakeholder, consultative, and participatory approach, transforming interest in diaspora engagement into concrete action for development.
- City networks – such as [Eurocities](#) and ICMPD's [Mediterranean City-to-City Migration \(MC2CM\)](#) projects – work to bring together city leaders, civil servants and local, national, and international multidisciplinary experts to discuss, learn from, and contribute to improved migration governance at urban level. The [Cities Network for Integration](#) (Greece) brings together 18 municipalities to support refugees, migrants, and receiving communities.

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- [Local connections for local solutions: Lessons learned in Tanzania.](#)
- [Now more than ever: Afghans in Pakistan need more mobility and durable solutions to stay.](#)
- [Out-of-camp but not out of mind: Supporting Syrian refugees in Jordan's cities.](#)
- [Resolving the 'mobility paradox': Lessons from southern Europe.](#)
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Working Papers – Figurations of displacement in:

- [DRC](#)
- [Ethiopia](#)
- [Germany](#)
- [Jordan](#)
- [Pakistan](#)
- [Southern Europe \(Greece & Italy\)](#)
- [Tanzania](#)

TRAFIG

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The Transnational Figurations of Displacement (TRAFIG) project, a three-year Horizon 2020 research and innovation project, investigated long-lasting displacement situations in Africa, Asia, and Europe and analysed options to improve the lives of displaced persons by enhancing their chances of building a sustainable future. Undertaking more than 2,700 interviews with displaced persons, policymakers and practitioners in 11 countries, TRAFIG studied the reasons why people end up in protracted displacement situations and what coping strategies they use, identifying possible courses of action for policymakers and solutions that are better tailored to the needs and capacities of displaced persons. The project focused on long-lasting displacement, but its findings also provide important lessons for preventing new displacement from becoming protracted.



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