

: Conference Report

Berlin Summer Dialogue 2016

sef:

Displacement and Forced Migration. Rethinking Prevention

Larissa Neubauer

Since summer 2015, the image of a European “refugee crisis” has dominated public debate on the continent. And yet the figures tell a different story: 86 per cent of refugees live in developing countries, often in neighbour states. Out of 191 countries, just six are currently hosting more than half the world’s refugees. In the European Union, very few member states are willing to accept refugees. These comparisons were presented by Fabrizio Hochschild, the UN Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Adviser on the Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, in his keynote at the Berlin Summer Dialogue 2016. As he pointed out, this is not only a crisis in terms of refugee numbers: it is also a crisis of international solidarity, cooperation and fair responsibility-sharing.

At the two-day conference in Berlin Town Hall, organised by the Development and Peace Foundation (sef:) with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), experts from politics, academia and civil society discussed the diverse causes of displacement and forced migration and considered more effective methods of prevention.

A refugee crisis – or a crisis of solidarity?

One of the objectives of the Summit on large movements of refugees and migrants, which will be convened by the UN General Assembly in September 2016, is to initiate a move towards fair international responsibility-sharing. The parlous state of affairs described above – with a handful of countries taking on responsibility for the majority of the world’s refugees – was the catalyst. Another key issue on the agenda is respect for the human rights of refugees and migrants. Violations of these rights are all too common – in the home country, while people are on the move, and sometimes in the host countries as well. Faced with haunting images of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon therefore published a report ahead of the Summit, entitled *In Safety and Dignity: Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants*, in which he makes recommendations to ensure at all times the human rights, dignity and safety of refugees and migrants



Berlin Summer Dialogue 2016: Plenary

and announced plans to initiate a global campaign to counter xenophobia. He also proposed that member states should agree two global compacts on responsibility-sharing for refugees and respect for the rights of migrants. The main aim is to achieve fair responsibility-sharing by the international community. Fabrizio Hochschild pointed out that displacement and migration are nothing new – indeed, migration is built into our DNA. However, finding solutions is made more difficult by certain ideologies and a weak response from governments, which should be doing more to address the growing global problem of xenophobia. He also made it clear that in the eyes of the world, Germany is seen to be leading by example, and that he firmly believed that the situation could be managed if everyone pulls together.

Susanne Melde, Research and Policy Officer at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) in Berlin, also pointed out that migration has a very long history. However, a common assumption in the development cooperation context – that more development reduces migration – does not stand up to scrutiny. On the contrary, development actually facilitates new migration.

Challenges for refugee support in the development context

Dr Elke Löbel, Commissioner for Refugee Policy at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Bonn, underlined that the topic of “development cooperation” had finally reached the public consciousness as a consequence of the refugee crisis. However, it is also clear that development cooperation cannot simply be re-labelled as a method of combating the causes of displacement and that patience and persistence are essential.

The current situation clearly shows that refugee support involves a range of tasks which require improved interdepartmental coordination across all policy areas. It is also essential to overcome opposition in host countries so that refugees are able to assert their human rights. The international community should bring pressure to bear – also at the Summit – on those who show a lack of solidarity on refugee issues.

Support for refugees and host countries will be needed over the short, medium and long term. Short-term assistance, for example, is provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) in the form of food aid, but due to donors’ failure to honour their financial commitments, it has run into difficulties,

especially last year. This was one of the factors which prompted many Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries to set out on the journey to Europe. In the medium term, the provision of essential infrastructure and services, such as water, education and livelihoods, plays an important role. In the long term, joined-up thinking on refugee return and prevention is required to prevent any resurgence of old conflicts. Reconciling the interests of refugees and host communities is often a balancing act, said Dr Löbel. Refugees need to be offered prospects for the future even though many people would prefer to regard their presence as purely temporary.



Berlin Summer Dialogue 2016: Fabrizio Hochschild

Preventing further displacement

In recent months, the plight of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries has focused attention on the importance of creating prospects for the future in order to avoid further displacement. However, this is an extremely difficult task, as the Berlin Summer Dialogue made clear. Rarely are there solutions which please everyone: refugee camp residents, those who find refuge outside the camps and who are therefore more difficult to reach, but also the host communities, which often face major challenges of their own, such as hunger, poverty and a lack of prospects. The contrast in the provision of services for refugees compared with host communities can cause feelings of envy. There are also major differences between countries: Norah Kariba, Programme Manager at the Windle Trust in Kenya, on seeing photos of refugee camps in Jordan, remarked that the refugees from Syria clearly had a “better deal” than those in Dadaab.

There are stumbling blocks in the provision of services for refugees: many UN programmes are underfunded and despite pledges, there is often a very long wait until the money actually arrives – if it ever arrives at all. Furthermore, humanitarian aid programmes do not always consider the needs of host communities. Another problem is the variation in assessments of the refugee situation: as Stefan Delfs, Advisor in the Policy Planning Staff at the German Federal Foreign Office, pointed out, it is sometimes difficult to engage host countries in discussions about permanent structures. However, as the situation drags on, continuing to insist that the

Dadaab therefore provide schooling not only for refugee children but also for children from local communities. This makes an important contribution to conflict resolution, as the two sides have the opportunity to get to know each other and build mutual understanding.

The right to work in the host country is also important, a point emphasised by World Bank adviser John Speakman with reference to Jordan. An agreement has now been reached to give Syrian refugees in Jordan better access to work permits, but it is hoped that Jordanians will also share in the benefits.

Beyond refugee support and integration, many experts at the Berlin Summer Dialogue pointed out that the global refugee crisis can only be defused on a permanent basis if the causes of displacement and forced migration are addressed more effectively, especially since these causes – which include armed conflicts, more frequent extreme weather events, disputes over the access to natural resources and, above all, widening inequality between rich and poor – may well worsen in future. Instead of simply funding more aid programmes, it is essential to achieve greater equality. The roundtable discussions therefore focused on the diverse causes of displacement and migration.



Berlin Summer Dialogue 2016: Norah Gaiti Kariba

presence of refugees is only temporary leads to frustration, a lack of prospects, renewed displacement and potentially even to violence. This prompted a lively discussion about an issue raised by Dr Steffen Angenendt, Head of the Global Issues Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin: is it right to focus mainly on the camps, or should we be rethinking our approach in order to facilitate earlier and more effective integration of refugees into host communities?

Key factors: education and employment

In long-term refugee crises, access to education and employment is immensely important. Education is something that refugees can take with them and make use of. However, as Norah Kariba pointed out, education programmes for refugee children are often underfunded. The education projects in

The “global governance crisis” – a cause of displacement and forced migration

In his keynote, Professor Tobias Debiel, Director of the Institute for Development and Peace (INEP) at the University of Duisburg-Essen, pointed out that in order to gain an understanding of the current refugee movements, it is essential to take a broader view. These movements cannot be attributed solely to repression and conflict, but are, in his view, partly a consequence of what he called a “global governance crisis”. Until the late 1990s, there was, in practice, an international consensus that conflicts should be resolved through negotiated peace agreements between the various parties. This consensus on building peace appears to have collapsed – with devastating consequences, according to Professor Debiel. The paralysis of the international community by the major powers, mainly the US and Russia – as in Syria – and the rise of local powers make it much more difficult to make peace in a multilateral framework.

A further threat to international governance results from the West’s response to armed conflicts and repressive regimes in recent years: there is often a reliance on military intervention, generally with the aim of bringing about swift regime change. In

many cases, this has led to state failure and has been a major contributory factor to migration and displacement. This year's Peace Report by leading German peace research institutes concludes that the selective delivery of weapons to armed groups contributes to destabilisation and has worsened the problems of displacement and forced migration.

Comprehensive peace processes and local solutions are essential

Elizabeth Rushing, Senior Strategic Advisor on Conflict at the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (idmc), Geneva, also underlined that the lack of a holistic peacebuilding approach has led to the current refugee movements. This, she said, is evident in numerous conflicts, especially in Latin America. A further problem is that in this context, displaced persons and the issues that affect them are often overlooked. Lack of data makes it more difficult to provide targeted support for this group.

Colombia has the potential to become a best practice example of a negotiated peace that takes displaced persons into account, according to Christian Völkel, an international advisor working for GIZ in Bogotá. It is interesting that although this is a democratic country, repression at the local level can still lead to forced displacement. At present, the number of displaced persons in Colombia is increasing by 150,000 each year. However, the country is currently in transition, making it clear that local solutions

Caroline Njuki from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Djibouti agreed that local problems require local solutions. Regional



Berlin Summer Dialogue 2016: Elke Löbel

organisations have a key role to play in this context. In East Africa and the Horn of Africa in particular, it is apparent that long-lasting refugee crises can themselves become a source of new violence. Refugee return and reintegration must be properly managed and based on a long-term perspective. Otherwise, they can cause hostility and new conflicts that may spill over to other countries.

Addressing the breeding ground for extremism

Another factor which is becoming increasingly important as a cause of displacement and forced migration, wars and conflicts is (predominantly Islamist) extremism, particularly in the Arab countries and some regions in Africa and Asia. There are very few studies at present that provide adequate insights into the reasons why people join radical groups. However, it is clear that radicalisation is happening increasingly quickly. Extremists use effective communication strategies and appear to offer simple solutions to complex problems, as well as prospects for the future. This, coupled with the sense of belonging that they engender, appeals to people, especially the young, in countries as diverse as Cameroon, Nigeria, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Liv Wibe, a PhD Student at the Freie Universität Berlin, has observed in her work with refugees in Pakistan that if their situation remains unchanged for a long period of time and they have



Berlin Summer Dialogue 2016: Tobias Debiel, Christian Völkel, Linda Helfrich, Caroline Njuki und Elizabeth J. Rushing (l.t.r.)

must be found to local conflicts in order to combat new causes of conflict. By contrast, the much-vaunted goal of regime change is unlikely to produce the desired outcomes. A negotiated peace is therefore better than any other solution.

no prospects for the future, they are in some cases much more vulnerable to manipulation by extremists. Extremism has a shocking impact: in Africa, it has displaced more than three million people, most of whom are still living within their own countries. In many countries, displacement, the destruction of infrastructure and the introduction of anachronistic and repressive laws are reversing development progress to an alarming extent.

Current efforts to reduce the influence of the extremists are having little effect. Hesta Groenewald from Saferworld reported on an international study which showed that military options are largely ineffective as a quick fix. Long-term engagement and more prevention projects are the only viable approach. Mohammed Yahya, Africa Regional Programme Coordinator for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Addis Ababa, identified a practical challenge: the international donors' three- to four-year project cycles. He also pointed out that extremism and terrorism have a far more devastating effect on development in African countries than anywhere else in the world.

Instead of the reliance on military options, local communities should be involved in identifying the radicalisation of individuals at an early stage and in sending a clear message that extremist ideologies have no real solutions to offer. However, the main factor in depriving extremists of their appeal is structural reform: firstly, it is essential to establish good governance so that local communities benefit from the resource wealth that exists in many countries, for example. And secondly, access to good education and local employment is essential in creating prospects for the future. In order to ensure that young people do not miss out on these opportunities, they must be involved in problem-solving, according to Rashid Zuberu, an activist and founder of Young Peace Brigades from Ghana.

Managing rather than preventing environmental migration

Environmental changes do not necessarily cause displacement or forced migration. Dennis Tänzler, Director of International Climate Policy at adelphi in Berlin, cautioned against seeing climate-related migration as a threat, pointing out that migration has always served as an adaptation strategy. However, strengthening resilience to environmental change should be the first step. Migration is often the response when people's habitats become so impaired that normal life becomes impossible.

Environmental change in fragile settings – in other words, where conflicts have erupted, perhaps over

access to natural resources such as water and land – is a particularly important factor. Conflicts may worsen if lack of resources in rural regions triggers a mass movement to the cities. In order to mitigate the risk of slum expansion on the margins of major cities, Tasneem Siddiqui, Founding Chair of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) at the University of Dhaka, called for countries with an increased risk of displacement and migration to integrate these issues into their



Berlin Summer Dialogue 2016: Tasneem Siddiqui

national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs). Here, early management of migration is essential and must include targeted measures for expanding medium-sized urban regions and increasing their attractiveness. National-level urban planning can do much to curb the uncontrolled expansion of slums and the associated conflicts and problems over access to resources. She conceded, however, that in practice, corruption is often the biggest problem of all.

The political debate tends to focus solely on the problems: this point of criticism was raised by Annabelle Houdret from the German Development Institute (DIE) in Bonn. She referred to many more cases in which environmental projects can be used as a basis for cooperation. At the local level in particular, a mutual interest in sustainable management of resources can often lead to a better understanding among stakeholders, and this can be beneficial for civilian conflict management.

Treating the symptoms instead of addressing the problems?

Concluding the discussions, Dr Michèle Roth, Executive Director of the Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), identified a number of funda-



Berlin Summer Dialogue 2016: Rashid Zuberu, Hesta Groenewald, Jochen Hippler, Liv Ingeborg Wibe und Mohamed Yahya (l.t.r.)

mental problems which had often been mentioned in passing during the Summer Dialogue but were not at the heart of the debate. One of them was the global governance crisis, reflected not only in the lack of multilateral conflict management but also in the absence of responsibility-sharing within the international community. The economic system is also in crisis: it causes massive environmental degradation, widens inequality between rich and poor, and deprives young people in developing countries of prospects for the future. And finally, the world is in the grip of a power struggle which aims to achieve success through conflict rather than through cooperation. In view of these crises, the measures discussed often seem to be little more than sticking plaster solutions that bring temporary relief but cannot solve the underlying long-term problems. Reflecting more intensively on ways and means to make the world a fairer place should therefore be the next step. The Summer Dialogue has identified some of the options: they include a move away from regime change towards regime transformation, and more effective use of taxation and social security systems to combat inequality.

Imprint

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