INTRODUCTION

Violent conflicts are becoming more complex and protracted, with more than six times the number fought within, rather than between states in 2019. Instability and violence are increasingly transnational because of porous borders, proliferation of arms and networks of armed groups operating internationally. Whether in response to armed insurgencies, violent extremism, civic or inter/intra-communal hostilities, restoring and sustaining peace has increasingly become a global priority.

In addition to being complex and protracted, conflicts produce many dire consequences. Conflict-related human mobility is one such consequence that requires concerted international efforts. Forced displacement provides a focus and sense of urgency to not only address humanitarian needs but also to restore and sustain peace.

This thematic paper focuses on the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) role and experience supporting peacebuilding in response to the mobility dimensions of crisis, particularly forced displacement both within and across borders. Crisis is referred to here as the “circumstances experienced when natural or human induced, rapid or slow onset, shocks (e.g. armed conflict, state failure…) exceed the capacity of a community, country or region to cope, resulting in a direct threat to the lives, safety and security of affected populations.”

This paper outlines IOM’s contributions to United Nations system-wide peacebuilding efforts; discusses mobility dimensions of crisis and sustaining peace; and presents examples of IOM’s interventions at the Chad-Central African Republic border, and in Lebanon, Niger, Somalia, and South Sudan. IOM implements a broad range of interventions, including community stabilization, disengagement, disassociation, reintegration and reconciliation (DDRR), security sector reform (SSR), preventing violent extremism (PVE), community policing, among others. These activities are implemented within and across borders to address the underlying causes and drivers of displacement, as well as facilitating lasting solutions.

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1 Barbra Lukunka/Humanitarian, Peace and Security Unit/IOM Office to the UN authored this paper in collaboration with Sam Grundy/IOM Department of Operations and Emergencies/IOM Headquarters. The paper reflects the views of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

2 This is noting that many internal armed conflicts are also where nation states engage in different forms of armed conflict by proxy. See https://www.statista.com/statistics/278212/number-of-domestic-and-international-conflicts-worldwide-by-intensity/


4 IOM, Operational Guide: Community Stabilization Programmes and Approaches, internal document, 2020, p.8
IOM’S CONTRIBUTION TO UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM-WIDE PEACEBUILDING

IOM implements peacebuilding activities in over 50 countries. Its interventions have a strong focus on community approaches and are aligned with recommendations of the Secretary-General’s report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The recommendations of the Secretary-General fall under four core areas: 1) operational and policy coherence; 2) leadership, accountability and capacity; 3) financing for peacebuilding; and 4) partnerships for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. With regards to operational and policy coherence, IOM views sustaining peace as well as the Secretary-General’s prevention agenda as critical goals. To this end, it actively engages in various United Nations processes, such as the scale up of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Burkina Faso launched in 2019 as part of the Secretary-General’s sustaining peace agenda.

Furthermore, IOM works with other United Nations entities to ensure coherent and joint action and applies policies and standards including the United Nations Community Engagement Guidelines and the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) in its interventions. IOM also contributes to the Secretary-General’s goal to strengthen integrated peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts by partnering with United Nations peacekeeping. For instance, with the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), IOM has worked on durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs), and with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), IOM has been supporting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts.

In terms of leadership, accountability and capacity, IOM has been actively enhancing its support to integrated United Nations efforts and has captured lessons and best practices on key issues such as the humanitarian, development and peace nexus (HDPN). In 2019, IOM conducted a multi-country study on the operationalization of the HDPN that was shared with the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) to advance humanitarian and development collaboration in order to contribute not only to global policy discourse but also share knowledge aimed at strengthening capacities at the field level. With respect to partnerships, IOM implements peacebuilding interventions jointly with other United Nations agencies, peace operations, national and local actors as well as sub-regional and regional organizations. It prioritizes engagement with the youth, women and civil society, and aims to reinforce their role in peacebuilding, particularly their potential to transform conflict dynamics.

THE MOBILITY DIMENSIONS OF CRISIS AND SUSTAINING PEACE

As an entity whose focus is on human mobility, IOM addresses challenges faced by individuals and communities engaged in different forms of movements. Because almost all the world’s violent conflicts are accompanied by different forms of human mobility, addressing these movements and their causes contributes to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In this section, different human

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5 IOM Operationalizing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: Lessons from Colombia, Mali, Nigeria, Somali and Turkey (2019).
mobility typologies and their link to sustaining peace, are discussed.\(^6\) One typology is *forced displacement*, both within and across borders. Since 2000, the total number of individuals displaced by conflict has doubled.\(^7\) By the end of 2018, there were a total of 41.3 million conflict-related IDPs globally.\(^8\) Failing to address the drivers of conflict that resulted in displacement in the first place can either prevent populations from returning, which contributes to protracted displacement situations, or result in a relapse into conflict when populations return. Furthermore, in some instances, perceptions of differences, resource competition and a sense of relative deprivation lead to conflict between displaced groups and/or groups on the move and the receiving/host communities.

Another human mobility typology is *transhumance*. This movement, often both within and across borders, is increasingly occurring in contexts where climate change is decreasing the availability of aquifers and grazing lands, and has led to resource-based conflicts between different pastoralist groups or with sedentary farmers, as evidenced in parts of the Sahel and East Africa. These contexts often require community stabilization efforts accompanied by livelihood interventions to prevent an escalation of violence. IOM’s community stabilization approach aims to promote stability at the local level as a step out of crisis or fragility, paving the way for more sustainable development approaches.\(^9\) Community stabilization is therefore a critical subset of peacebuilding.

*Trafficked and smuggled individuals* are part of another human mobility typology and they also face challenges that are often compounded by conflict. These individuals often find themselves stranded or detained in countries experiencing conflict, or *return en masse*, often as a result of deportation. Not only is this population often extremely vulnerable to various human rights violations and hardships, but their return and reintegration into fragile communities and vulnerable households is often a cause of tension and conflict if not adequately supported.

Both conflict-affected migrants and displaced persons often play a pivotal and positive role in IOM’s peacebuilding programmes by, for example, actively participating in the identification of causes of conflict and activities to address them. To capitalize on the opportunities and innovative ways in which they contribute to sustaining peace, it is important to engage both displaced groups and migrants and host communities as part of the solution to restoring and sustaining peace and to facilitated constructive processes between the two groups to address inevitable tensions. This is particularly pressing in environments characterized by fear and misperceptions of displaced groups and migrants.

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\(^6\) This section does not provide an exhaustive list of human mobility typologies, but instead focuses on some of the main typologies that IOM addresses in its peacebuilding efforts.


\(^9\) IOM, *Operational Guide: Community Stabilization Programmes and Approaches*, internal document, 2020, p.8
IOM’S PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES: EFFORTS CONTRIBUTING TO SUSTAINING PEACE

This section presents examples of some of IOM’s peacebuilding work implemented with various partners and discusses some of the key outcomes of its interventions.

Niger: Prioritizing Community Engagement and Local Mechanisms for Peace

IOM focuses on building peace in a sustainable way by prioritizing community engagement and traditional mechanisms to address instability and conflict. This approach is significant because it ensures inclusivity, sustainability of efforts and that interventions are carried out in partnership with local communities and in a manner that resonates with and is part of the cultural landscape of communities. As indicated in the United Nations-World Bank report “[w]ith conflict today often simultaneously subnational and transnational, sustained, inclusive, and targeted engagement is needed at all levels.”¹⁰

In Niger, IOM has been working on a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded project for the last five years across the Diffa and Tillaberi regions aimed at using local mechanisms and community engagement to promote peace. The project aims at preventing the population, particularly the youth, from engaging in violent activities. In recent years, there has been an increase in violent extremist activity in Niger. This project uses a community stabilization approach by preparing communities for government-led efforts aimed at reintegrating Boko-Haram/ISIS-West Africa defectors. IOM does not engage directly with former fighters in this project; however, its activities require engaging with local leaders and authorities to prepare them in their efforts to reintegrate low risk individuals into communities. These efforts have led to the creation of nearly 500 peace committees at the village level and at the border areas, trained in promoting peace, reconciliation and tolerance. These groups provide early warning and are comprised of women, youth, village chiefs and local imams. Activities also include cultural events organized by the communities, together with IOM, aimed at restoring social cohesion.

Perception surveys conducted in the areas of operation involving 2,700 respondents in five communes in Diffa, revealed that from March 2018 to March 2019 the percentage of individuals with positive attitudes towards violence perpetrated by Boko Haram/ISIS-West Africa had significantly decreased from 24 per cent to 2 per cent. And in the same timeframe, the percentage of the local population that had increased understanding of the reintegration programme and expressed willingness to accept defectors increased from 30 per cent to 69 per cent.

Lebanon: Building Relationships between Refugees and Host Communities through Community Stabilization Activities

In various parts of the globe, IOM’s work focuses on building relationships between groups, particularly displaced populations and host communities, in order to ease tensions and prevent violent incidents fueled by, among others, perceived differences and relative deprivation. An example of this work is conducted in Lebanon, where many displaced persons from Syria are hosted.

Over the years, basic services have been insufficient to cover local communities and the displaced population. Integrating refugee youth has been particularly difficult in Northern Lebanon where refugee communities have been blamed by host communities for the rise in crimes and increased environmental degradation.

IOM implemented a project funded by the Government of Canada from 2017 to 2019 in Lebanon to reduce tensions by promoting a culture of constructive collaboration through activities such as road rehabilitation, and clean-up campaigns, among others. The project also reinforced local government and civil society’s capacity to respond to and mitigate tensions. Beneficiaries reported that the activities enabled communities to broaden their networks and create new relationships with members of different communities. It was noted that the relationships that were built led to changes in perceptions about other groups contributing to a reduction in tensions. Overall, 82.9 per cent of beneficiaries stated that they found that the activities had positively impacted their relationships. A total 90 per cent of beneficiaries reported that the intervention brought Syrians refugees and Lebanese together. Furthermore, 48.6 per cent reported a decrease in the number of security incidents related to conflict around public services. This project, much like other community stabilization and peacebuilding projects, brought communities and individuals together, created bridges and transformed some perceptions that fuel fears.

South Sudan: Engaging the Youth as Potential Agents of Peace

A key focus for IOM is engaging with the youth and especially, when possible, in projects and activities implemented at the sub-regional level that have an impact on national political processes. Because localized conflicts tend to influence and be influenced by national dynamics, peacebuilding at the local level can have an impact on the overall and national peace process. Within these contexts, IOM engages with the youth as potential partners for sustaining peace.

In South Sudan, IOM together with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) implemented a project financed by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) from 2017 to 2018 that enhanced the capacity of ten youth-led local peace structures in four counties in Unity State, including cattle camps and the Bentiu protection of civilians site. The goal of the project was to encourage the youth to become more active and engaged in prevention and transformation of communal conflicts. The project addressed widespread local conflicts including cattle raids, revenge killing and community conflicts between IDPs, returnees and host communities by mobilizing and empowering youth to act as peace and conflict resolution intervenors. The project was relevant in its impact on the overall political and local conflict context, because the local peace structures addressed communal conflicts and promoted peaceful coexistence, efforts that complement the framework of the Revitalized Peace Agreement in Unity.

In Unity State, much like other states, communities are divided along ethnic line and communities are aligned with different parties to the conflict. Interventions in Unity helped bridge community relations by bringing together 60 youth from four warring clans (Bui Nuer, Jikany Nuer, Leep Nuer and Jagei Nuer). Consequently, beneficiaries of the project expressed positive perceptions of the project stating that the project created a platform for their voices to be heard by authorities and that it had given them space to be part of the peace process. State government officials lauded this
project for its efforts in bringing together 60 youth from different communities into the peace
dialogue process and for reducing tensions and communication barriers between communities who
had faced tensions and conflict.

Somalia: Building Resilience and Reintegrating Women IDPs
Another area of focus for IOM is building the resilience of communities through peacebuilding
initiatives. Through the PBF, IOM has been implementing a project since 2018 that aims to respond
to the needs of 150 women formerly associated with Al Shabab in Somalia and their dependents. The
majority of beneficiaries did not play a direct role with Al Shabab and were instead affiliated through
marriage, including forced marriage, being abducted or forced affiliation by virtue of residing on Al
Shabab controlled territory. In addition, many of the women are IDPs and are survivors of conflict-
related sexual violence. The rehabilitation and reintegration support package offered through this
project includes psychosocial support and counselling, medical referral, vocational and life-skills
training, business and livelihoods support, and community engagement activities, among others. As a
result of this project, 70 per cent of women beneficiaries improved their literacy skills, quadrupled
from the 18 per cent at the onset of the project. Furthermore, 83 per cent of women from the
community, over 800, who took part in the activities reported positive interactions with other
participants as well as the beneficiaries.

Central African Republic-Chad: Joint Programming and Cross-Border/Multi-Country Initiatives to
Address Conflict between Herders and Farmers
One of IOM’s comparative advantages is its ability to implement peacebuilding activities both within
and across borders. IOM works jointly with various United Nations entities such as the Food and
Agricultural Organization (FAO) and UNDP on cross-border projects, many of which focus on
prevention of violent conflict, community stabilization and social cohesion.

IOM has also increased its cross-border programming on preventing conflict between herders and
farmers. Conflict arise when herders change their routes or timing of their movements in response to
changes in climate patterns. The change in movement often disrupts herders’ symbiotic relationship
with farmers. In response, IOM is implementing transhumance projects with FAO in the Liptako
Gourma region between Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali borders as well as at the Central African Republic
and Chad borders to address conflicts between farmers and herders. IOM uses a data driven
approach in its peacebuilding efforts by using the displacement tracking matrix (DTM) and
transhumance tracking tool (TTT), to collect concrete data on the movements of herders that informs
the need for interventions be it conflict prevention initiatives or support to livelihood.

IOM works very closely with herders and regional herders’ associations to track transhumance
movements. Efforts also include working closely with local authorities and communities to promote
conflict prevention, mediation and community stabilization. IOM aims to continue to expand its
cross-border and multi-country efforts and support to regional entities such as the Economic
Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) in developing policies that are informed by better data and
tracking of herder movements.
CONCLUSION

Addressing the underlying causes of conflict or establishing conditions for sustainable peace is indeed a challenging endeavor given that conflict drivers are typically multivariate, context specific, mutually reinforcing and related to political challenges and development failures. IOM’s work on the mobility dimensions of crisis provides an area of focus in its efforts to contribute to sustaining peace across the globe. Through its peacebuilding efforts, IOM prioritizes working closely with communities impacted by conflict and whose forced displacement and movement poses a challenge to their wellbeing. By engaging with communities, both displaced/group on the move and host communities, in an inclusive and participatory manner, efforts are better able to be sustained by building resilience and promoting ownership and agency.

Addressing the mobility dimensions of crisis in order to restore and sustain peace requires a detailed understanding of contexts and conflict drivers as well as strong levels of coordination between actors contributing to peace. Working in partnership with other United Nations entities as well as regional, national and local partners ensures concerted efforts are directed to those impacted by conflict. In addition, capitalizing on the key role of displaced groups and others, and the innovative ways in which they contribute to sustaining peace is a cornerstone of IOM’s peacebuilding engagement. Working with youth and women, in particular, reinforces their role as peace agents and their potential to contribute to larger peace processes. By focusing on dialogue and mediation, resilience of communities and social cohesion to suture the torn fabric of communities, among others, efforts not only prevent relapse but also lapse in conflict.