



Promoting Development Rather Than Excluding People

Understanding development cooperation in the context of flight and migration

Migration has moved to the top of the agenda of national and international politics. In Europe and Germany, development cooperation and humanitarian aid are increasingly considered in the light of migration policy interests. Scores of new programmes and tools are aimed at helping to combat the causes of flight and migration. They do rely above all on development cooperation and disaster relief for the management of migration and the movement of refugees. But in reality, the prospects of influencing migration processes are actually very limited and development policy goals are in danger of being subordinated to migration management. If development policy is understood as an instrument of migration policy, it will serve above all the interests of the donor countries and much less benefit those to whom it is addressed. Migration movements result, for the most part, from inequality and injustice. These must be overcome, not with the primary goal to reduce migration, but rather to enable sustainable and viable development for everyone.

Old definitions, new realities

People leave their homelands for a variety of reasons. Generally, one distinguishes between flight and migration, though the two cannot be strictly differentiated. International law, in contrast, is unambiguous: according to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Refugee Convention), a refugee is a person outside the country of his/her nationality or former habitual residence, and who for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion has a well-founded fear of being persecuted and cannot avail him-/herself of the protection of that country; or, owing to such fear of persecution, is unwilling to return to it. A migrant is someone who is not immediately threatened by persecution or death, but in general seeks to improve her/his living standards and emigrates for a job opportunity, for education and/or training, for family reunion, or for other reasons from one country to another. It seems, however,

that there are more people worldwide who are looking to emigrate to economically prospering countries than such countries are willing to receive. Those looking to emigrate often find no legal way of entering the respective destination country. Apart from the right to asylum under international law, according to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it is in the sovereign jurisdiction of every individual state to determine who is permitted to enter and who is not. In the meantime, for many it is becoming more and more difficult to redeem their individual right to leave their homeland and return to it.

There is no binding definition of those who are regarded as migrants. Of the approximately 250 million people worldwide who live abroad, about 21.3 million are refugees. At least another 41 million are living as internally displaced people (IDPs), as refugees in their own countries. IDPs, however, are not protected by the 1951 Refugee Convention. At the time of its establishment in the 1950s, the Geneva Refugee Convention addressed above all the failure of the international community to protect millions of persecuted people during World War II.

Today there are far more refugees than those originally considered by the definition in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Causes of flight not taken into account in the Convention are, for instance, extreme weather conditions and the effects of climate change, which now force an average of more than 20 million people to flee their homes each year. Additionally, more and more land is becoming infertile, so that it is incapable of feeding people. Smallholder agriculture is being pressured by industrial land grabbing, soil erosion and the impacts of international trade policies. Fishing grounds have been depleted, and formal labour markets are shrinking in the face of nepotism and corruption. Likewise, rampant criminal violence in the Central American countries today forces more and more people to flee their homes.

A lack of perspective is what awaits many refugees in their havens. If those who are fleeing violence, war and terror do not find a place where they are welcome, where they can feed themselves and their families, where their children can go to school and they themselves can find regular work, they will try to escape their destiny. In the summer of 2015, for instance, this resulted in increasing refugee movements towards Europe. The support offered to the people from Syria seeking protection in its neighbouring countries dramatically deteriorated in the fourth year following the outbreak of the violent conflict.

Refugee and migration policies in the European Union

The reactions of the European Union and its member states to the increasing number of people seeking protection in Europe were unprepared, inconsistent and full of contradictions.

In September 2015, in keeping with the Dublin III Regulations, the German government decided to make use of the so-called »sovereignty clause« and no longer expelled Syrian refugees back to the countries through which they had initially entered the EU. Yet at the same time, the so-called Balkan Route was militarily sealed off, and almost all EU member states decided on a fundamental tightening of the right to asylum. Racist populist movements in many EU member states managed to gain popular support and have since been manipulating public opinion against those seeking asylum.

The Common European Asylum System shared by the EU member states has defined standards for the reception and care of refugees, and the implementation of their asylum procedures. But, in reality, an unfair system has evolved that burdens most



Since the fall of 2015, tightened asylum regulations have been decided in almost all of the EU member states.

of all Italy and Greece at the southernmost border with the responsibilities of asylum procedures in the EU, who are overwhelmed with the care of refugees arriving at their shores. Thus, in Greece, dramatic humanitarian abuse prevails in initial reception camps, some of which are barely distinguishable from detention facilities.

Outsourcing responsibility

With the coming into effect of the EU-Turkey Agreement in March 2016, refugees are now prevented from entering the EU. Requests for protection are considered inadmissible by declaring Turkey a quasi safe state – notwithstanding that it has not fully implemented the 1951 Refugee Convention, and that numerous human rights violations committed against refugees from Syria have been documented. However, European migration policy not only focuses on Turkey, but also increasingly on African transit and the home countries of migrants and refugees.

These include in particular the Maghreb, the West African region and the Horn of Africa. High-profile political processes have been initiated with the issue of numerous action plans, funds, programmes and projects. These aim to stop migrants and refugees preferably before they reach the external borders of Europe, or to send them back if they reside irregularly in the EU. For these people, leaving their countries of origin and passing through transit states is becoming increasingly difficult, even before they reach Europe's external borders. At the same time, there is a growing risk that they will be sent back to unsafe countries of origin or to a transit country.

In order to assert its own political interests concerning migration, the European Union – in keeping with the motto »more for more« and »less for less« – is trying to win the partner states' willingness to cooperate by promising attractive incentives in other political areas, such as security, economy or development. The negotiation of readmission agreements, for instance, are closely associated with generous financial commitments for development projects. Trade preferences will be granted for the effective combat of human trafficking. Regions of origin and transit, such as Mali, Niger, Egypt or Tunisia, who are all becoming involved in securing borders, combatting human trafficking and traffickers, as well as intercepting those seeking protection, receive large amounts of money in exchange. The money flows into border control technology, training or

equipment for the border police – and much less into actual concepts of protection or improved conditions for admission.

This policy contradicts the United Nations Agenda 2030, in which the international community agreed in 2015 to facilitate »orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies«. The policy advanced by the European Union fails to recognize that for many people, especially in Africa, migration represents a way of living, shaped by trade and nomadic pasture farming, that has existed for centuries. Though the arbitrary demarcation by former colonial powers has obstructed this tradition, it has never completely ended it.

Migration opens new horizons for action, it promotes dialogue, exchange and, to a certain extent, development. It is a strategy to follow in attaining better living conditions, personal goals and hope. The remittances transferred by migrants back to their countries of origin exceed by far any development aid and have become indispensable for the economies of many recipient countries.

At first glance, this externalization policy, for example in terms of migration partnerships, may seem to attain the goals set by the EU. The number of migrants and refugees entering Europe for instance via Turkey or Tunisia, diminishes significantly with the new partnership agreements. Closer inspection reveals, however, that the migration and flight routes are merely relocated. The ones who suffer are the migrants and refugees who are now subjected to even greater risks and danger. Human rights violations are ignored or deliberately condoned as long as refugees and migrants are intercepted outside the European Union. The death toll in the Mediterranean continues to soar unabatedly. Regimes who are responsible for violence and persecution are now involved in border security, thus receiving legitimization for their actions by the EU. Regional and national conflicts in countries of origin and transit exacerbate when people are detained or deported against their will. Socially and politically fragile states, such as those at the Horn of Africa, are especially afflicted. Refugees and migrants held in transit countries deliberately on behalf of the EU have almost no chance of making a living there. The outcome is a desperate life in limbo. Racism and violent brutality against refugees and migrants is increased due to the stigmatisation and criminalisation pushed by politicians and the media.



So far, Ethiopia has welcomed more than 700,000 refugees, in particular from South Sudan and Somalia. But more and more Ethiopians themselves want to leave their country due to its repressive government. This does not stop the EU's unflinching reliance on Ethiopia as a partner to intercept refugees and migrants.

Dealing with causes of flight

Apart from striving to outsource their responsibility toward migrants and people seeking protection, the EU and its member states are equally emphatic about their intention to reduce the causes of flight and migration. People should no longer have any reason to leave their countries of origin.

In keeping with this approach, the social, economic and political framework will be designed in such a way that emigration will no longer be necessary, and this, ideally, will be the case in the countries of origin or transit. Moreover, any hopes for a better life in the country of destination will not even be raised. Deterrence from, or awareness of the multiple dangers of life on the migration and flight routes, as well as an unwelcome reception in Europe will be conveyed through elaborate information campaigns.

Development cooperation is considered the main instrument in preventing or reducing flight and migration for which more and more funds are to be made available. This requires numerous redeployments of programmes in which migration and flight so far have played a minor role. Thus government development cooperation is aimed

predominantly at preventing migration rather than reducing poverty and supporting people in their pursuit of an independent and autonomous life. Even the outsourcing of migration management is sometimes declared a development measure. The focus is no longer on the countries with largest development deficits, but on those states from which a high number of migrants is expected. Development programmes are explicitly subjected to the condition that successful partnerships work toward the externalisation of migration control and refugee protection.

The political discourse implies that development cooperation and humanitarian aid could confront – efficaciously and in the short term – the worldwide scenario of flight and displacement. But the ensuing discourse is often only superficial. Humanitarian aid and measures to alleviate the plight of displaced persons, or the externalisation of migration control and refugee protection are equated with combating causes of flight.

Countries whose borders are next to war or conflict zones, and who receive large numbers of refugees are often under extreme economic and political strain. Nine out of ten people seeking protection worldwide live in developing countries. The countries

of refuge need support and relief in helping those who seek protection. Here, humanitarian aid is essential. It serves to restore safety and humane minimum standards for those affected by disaster, war and displacement. This includes precautionary measures intended to reduce or even prevent future damage, as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes.

In addition to immediate emergency aid in the host countries, concepts are needed for medium-term and sustainable development programmes. This will avoid, for instance, extended stays in refugee camps, which offer no future prospects, or the on-going marginalisation that is now reality for the vast majority of refugees. Refugees who are unable to return to their regions of origin in the foreseeable future need legal status in the countries of refuge, which would enable them to live without discrimination and persecution and to access medical care and accommodation. Especially in countries where such conditions are not met, even for the local population, cautious and considerate development cooperation is needed that benefits both refugees and the locals. Investment in education is desperately needed, given that it will provide sustainable opportunities for refugees and help to meet the conditions needed for their economic independence and participation in society.

Causes of flight and the role of development cooperation

Traditionally, the aims of development cooperation are to countervail violent conflicts, to prevent uncertainties and to overcome the lack of prospects. Restoring peace must become a political priority. Wars and violent conflicts are often the decisive factors for flight and forced migration. Strategies for sustainable and peaceful development cannot be enforced from the outside but must be elaborated locally and adapted to the respective circumstances. For the permanent establishment of peace, an increased commitment to the prevention of violent conflicts is needed as well as the support of the peace-seeking powers. This will enable the early detection of causes of conflict, a peaceful resolution of conflicts and reconciliation following an escalation of violence. What is important is to involve and make responsible the local communities, taking into consideration their views and opinions on the development of possible solutions.

Measures and tools that are aimed at reducing the causes of flight must be reviewed with the specific objective of making sure they neither intensify conflicts nor generate additional causes of flight. It must be made evident to which extent they help in combatting a lack of economic perspectives or ecological devastation, or how they counteract exclusion from participating in political decision-making.

The prerequisites for peaceful and sustainable development

Sustainable improvements, which are also conducive to making essential changes in promoting peace, cannot be achieved by simply focusing on troubled areas. The chronic and acute crises that force people to flee can seldom be attributed just to local circumstances. Structural conditions can in fact thwart even the best local development concepts. This refers to the effects of lax arms export policies, to corruption and illicit financial flows, the lack of due diligence for supply chains, as well as the extreme exploitation of land in the unquenchable thirst for energy supplies. Because of the impact of their policies on migration, agriculture, foreign trade, commerce, raw materials, climate policy and arms exports, Germany and the European Union are also involved in creating many flight causes due to their sustained obstruction or destruction of the opportunities of those in the affected countries.

Despite extremely escalated situations on the ground, Germany continues to exacerbate conflicts by exporting armaments to the Near and Middle East, and even to countries bordering on areas under the influence of the Islamic State, such as Lebanon and Jordan. As well as the export of arms, reproduction licences for German small arms have also been authorised. Due to the lack of control of the location and longevity of small arms and light weapons, German arms can be found throughout the whole region.

Conclusion

The efforts of German and European politics to contain flight and migration in Europe also aim to combat the causes of flight. This, however, is in blatant conflict with the externalisation of migration control as well as the attempt to transfer the

responsibility for refugees to third countries. Human rights violations, violence and the potential for conflict increase as a result of these measures.

Instead, to contain violent conflicts, more emphasis must be given to diplomatic crisis management and the possibilities of civil conflict regulation. Rather than promoting cooperation with authoritarian regimes, partnerships with civil society actors must be extended and strengthened. The establishment of sustainable and fair societies can only be accomplished by respecting and protecting human rights and by supporting the right to participation and co-determination.

If development cooperation is reduced to the sole purpose of flight prevention, then it will miss its true objective. Development cooperation and humanitarian aid must be geared to the needs of people and not serve political negotiation. Development policy action should honour the commitment to overcome poverty, the integrity of creation and the fulfilment of human rights. The peaceful regulation of conflicts and the prevention of violent conflicts, as part of a precautionary development policy that may also be conducive for the mitigation of flight causes, requires more resources than just personnel and long-term funding.

Germany and Europe are not absolved from the responsibility of receiving refugees by reconstructing and expanding infrastructures, strengthening the forces of civil society, reducing the causes of flight, or by committing themselves to refugees in initial reception countries. In taking responsibility for the structural causes of inequalities and inequities, a careful and supportive policy must include a change in the perspective and politics of German and European foreign policy. This does not mean preventing people from fleeing, but rather enabling their right to an autonomous life in their homeland. The decision to migrate should not be made in consequence of a lack of prospects in life. But if people find themselves forced to flee or they decide to emigrate, then their protection and the legal framework in the transit and destination countries must be reliably safeguarded.

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