

Transnational Figurations of Displacement

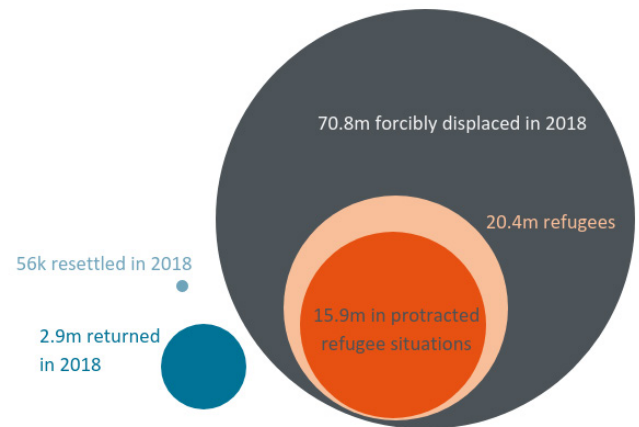
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Exploring new solutions to protracted displacement

Between 2000 and 2018, the world witnessed a threefold increase of the number of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs)—from a total number of 22.8 million to 70.8 million. In 2018 alone, 13.6 million people were newly displaced—both within their countries and across borders—due to armed conflicts, human rights violations and oppressive regimes. While global displacement grew, repatriation, resettlement and local integration only provide a sustainable solution for a small number of affected people.

UNHCR estimates that there were about 15.9 million refugees who had been in exile for five consecutive years or more in a given asylum country by the end of 2018, thus living in *protracted refugee situations*. This corresponds to three-quarters of all refugees. The total number of people in protracted displacement is, however, far higher. Yet, there are no comparable figures on long-lasting displacement of IDPs.

To respond to the global challenge of protracted displacement, policymakers at national, regional and global levels have developed frameworks and support programmes. Referring to the most recent ones, both the European Union’s policy framework on forced displacement and development *Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance* (2016) and the United Nations’ *Global Compact on Refugees* (2018) emphasise the need to tackle long-lasting displacement and identify and plan for appropriate solutions and complementary pathways to protection. The African Union’s *Kampala Declaration on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons* (2009) also highlights the need for creating sustainable livelihoods and promoting the self-reliance of displaced persons while working towards durable solutions.



Protracted displacement situations arise when and where durable solutions are not made available or progress towards achieving these is stalled.

TRAFIG sees *protracted displacement* as a social constellation in which the capabilities of people for rebuilding their lives after displacement and the opportunities available to do so are severely limited for prolonged periods of time.

In protracted displacement situations, multiple constraining forces limit individuals from using their capacities and making their own free choices. These constraining forces relate to

- *displacing forces*, including conflict or disruption of livelihoods that have led to forced migration in the first place and that continue to hinder return to countries of origin,
- *marginalising forces*, ranging from legal restrictions to social exclusion and economic disadvantage, that prevent real local integration in recipient countries, and
- *immobilising forces*, such as restrictive visa policies and tightened border controls, that block a displaced person’s mobility and chances to seek a future elsewhere.

In the absence of long-term solutions provided by states, displaced people are engaged in creating and finding solutions on their own, building on multiple local and translocal social networks.

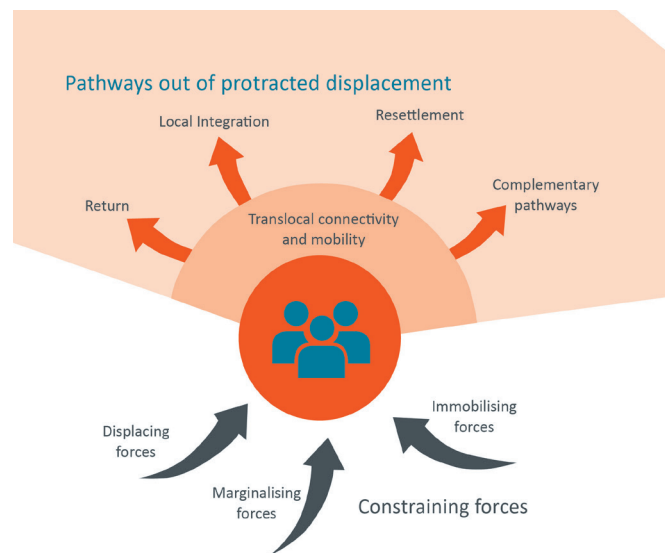
Networks of care, solidarity and trust present valuable resources for displaced people to cope with and to potentially resolve situations of protracted displacement. These networks reach from one place to another, and are hence referred to as “translocal”, and so do displaced people’s actions. Such translocal practices include

- mobility such as labour migration, family reunification or other forms of onward or return mobility,
- communication and transfer of information, ideas and emotions,
- transactions of financial and other resources, and
- maintaining multiple social ties and relations across (often distant) places.

Translocal connectivity and mobility can form part of the solutions to protracted displacement.

Solutions refer to the capability of displaced persons to rebuild their lives after displacement and the opportunities available to do so.

They should be based on displaced people’s own capacities, their diversified livelihood strategies, and their existing networks and mobile lives. Regaining dignity and strengthening self-reliance should take centre stage. Creating sustainable solutions to protracted displacement thus requires us to think beyond the classical durable solutions (return, local integration and resettlement), make use of complementary pathways to protection, and to encompass people’s translocal connectivity and mobility.



TRAFIG’s central hypothesis
The better connected and the more mobile refugees and IDPs are, the less likely it is that they end up in protracted displacement situations. Conversely, the less connected and the more immobilised displaced persons are, the greater the risk is that they are vulnerable, dependent and ‘living in limbo’.

New approaches are needed to better utilise and support practices applied by displaced people in their everyday lives, in particular their translocal connectivity and mobility.

The TRAFIG project aims to fill some of the knowledge gaps regarding protracted displacement by answering the question of how local and translocal networks are created and maintained, and how they contribute to providing protection and securing the livelihoods of displaced populations. The project thus seeks to inform policymakers and practitioners on how to develop solutions to protracted displacement that are tailored to the needs and capacities of persons affected by displacement.

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