KOFF
Die Schweizer Plattform für Friedensförderung
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The Swiss platform for peacebuilding

SDC Gender Network Call for Contributions on Gender & Migration

Peace(ful) opportunities: Gender, Migration and Peacebuilding

A reflection on the gender dimension of the peace – migration nexus work conducted by KOFF – the Swiss Platform for Peacebuilding in the framework of a "Joint Learning Process on Peacebuilding & Migration".

Protracted violent conflicts, human rights violations, climate change and increasing levels of inequality are some of the factors that force or motivate people – refugees and other migrants – to seek safety, well-being, and alternative livelihood opportunities elsewhere. In recent years, the numbers of refugees, IDPs and other migrants have increased. At the same time, with the rise of populism and authoritarianism, there has been a global shift towards restrictive migration policies, mainly at the level of nation states. In this context, the governance of migration and the protection of migrants and people affected by migration has become increasingly challenging, and unsurprisingly, these challenges are gendered in many ways. Hopes, aspirations and experiences related to migration are shaped by the multiple intersectional identities of migrants such as age, ethnicity, education level, and gender. This affects various dimensions of a migrant's experience, including protection and safety needs and vulnerabilities, the health and psychosocial situation, and opportunities and limitations of migrant's participation in the labor market or political processes.

In view of the complexity of impacts related to migration and dynamics at the individual, national and international level, the UN and most of its member states have recognized the need for alternative approaches to migration governance. The recent adoption of the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees, as well as the Agenda 2030, are international policy frameworks that build on and demand cooperation across various sectors to improve migration governance and contribute to peaceful and striving communities, the respect for human rights, and gender equality.

Against this background, the Swiss Platform for Peacebuilding KOFF has been engaging in a joint learning process on peace and migration (JLPM) since 2019. The multi-stakeholder process includes perspectives of multi-lateral, governmental and non-governmental institutions active in peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, human rights, gender, security sector governance and migration. It provides the space for joint reflection, exchange and learning about the opportunities and risks of the peace-migration nexus, and has resulted in the publication of the first version of a toolbox titled: "[Addressing migration in peace policy and practice](#)".
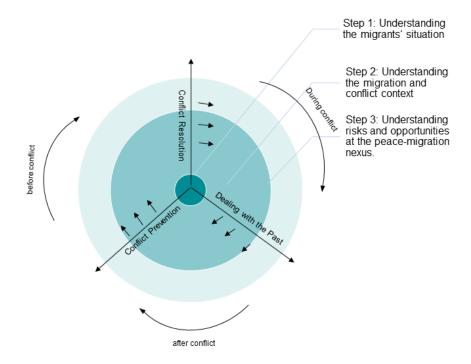
The toolbox builds on the expertise and practical experiences of more than 20 non-governmental, multi-lateral and state organizations, extensive literature review, as well as three in-depth case studies:

1) [Social cohesion and peacebuilding in the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh](#)

2) [Migration governance, peace and conflict in Ethiopia](#)

3) [Participation of the diaspora in the Colombian Truth Commission](#)

Based on the findings from these case studies, as well as the exchange and joint learning among the participating organizations, KOFF concludes that:

- Migration plays an important role in shaping peace and conflict dynamics. It can contribute positively or negatively to the prevention and resolution of fragility and violent conflict. Hence, engaging with migration is necessary to minimize the risks of migration for violent conflict and leverage its potential for peace.

- Migration is relevant in different phases of conflict. An integrated analysis of migration and conflict enables peacebuilders to identify the risks and opportunities of migration for conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and dealing with the past.

- Peacebuilders can approach the risks and opportunities of migration for conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and dealing with the past by designing and implementing programs in three main areas of engagement: (1) social cohesion, (2) migration governance, and (3) participation/inclusion.

The toolbox provides guidance on how to do so. It proposes the following framework for integrated analysis at the peace-migration nexus, which intends to guide policy makers and practitioners through their reflections.

The framework of analysis takes as its starting point the situation of the migrant or migrant group in a specific context. Step one asks the following questions: What identities, positions, interests, capacities exist within this group? How do the migrant's different gendered identities shape their experiences on the migration journey? What about their agency, i.e. their active involvement and meaningful participation in decision-making about their lives, both in private and public spheres? What kind of protection needs, and vulnerabilities do exist? What is their legal situation, and who has access to legal support? These are just some of the questions to be asked in step one. Depending on the gender identity, the answers to these questions differ significantly. An interesting example of such an analysis is the report on the situation of women refugees in the Swiss asylum system.

The situation of any group of migrants will be context specific, with specific patterns related to conflict, peace, and migration. These patterns are at the core of the analysis in the second step. It is important to understand the causes, drivers, and dynamics of conflict in the area, and how they do or do not interact with migration. Moreover, this step requires an analysis of actors, including conflict, peacebuilding, and migration governance actors, as well as host communities, returnees, and other actors affected by the conflict situation, as well as their relationships, the dividers and connectors, and the narratives around migration and conflict. Step two thus allows us to understand how the conflict and migration cycles overlap, resulting in context-specific situations that pose challenges and open opportunities for peacebuilding, human rights, and gender equality. For instance, people returning to their places of origin in a post conflict situation might bring in new experiences and views, and thereby contribute to challenging and transforming gender norms. Or, in a situation of ongoing violent conflict, traditional and ideas about masculinity might be put in question due to the limitations for men and boys to provide for their families in refugee camps. Or, women migrants might contribute to the peace process as evidenced in this video on Colombian women in exile.

Finally, the third step in the proposed framework for analysis focuses on identifying ways to adapt or design initiatives that address the above-mentioned challenges or opportunities at the intersection of migration, gender and conflict. The aim is to minimize the risks and leverage the potential of migration for peacebuilding. It suggests three main areas of engagement to contribute to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and dealing with the past: a) social cohesion; b) migration governance; c) participation and inclusion. Moreover, it identifies five (clustered) approaches to do so: 1) exchange and dialogue; 2) information and media; 3) advocacy and participation; 4) documentation and archives; 5) psychosocial support.

Objective: Contribute to mitigating risks and leveraging the potential of migration for conflict prevention, conflict resolution and dealing with the past.		
Area 1: Social cohesion	**Area 2: Migration governance**	**Area 3: Participation/ inclusion**
Improve and transform conflictual relationships between and among different groups of migrants, host communities, government(s), service providers, and international or national nongovernmental organizations in migration affected contexts, including in countries of origin and destination.	Engage with migration actors and policies to minimize the risk of migration governance leading to conflict and to enhance its positive impact for peace.	Ensure meaningful participation of migrants and include migration phenomena in peace processes.

Approaches: exchange and dialogue; information and media; advocacy and participation; documentation and archives; psychosocial support.

If we start our analysis by understanding the migrant's situation, as proposed here, it becomes evident that an intersectional gender lens is key to any engagement at the peace-migration nexus. It is important in any of the areas of engagement (i.e. social cohesion, migration governance and participation). In fact, it is not only a key element of a 'do no harm' lens, but might also contribute to peace, human rights and gender equality. The toolbox provides an entry-point for reflection and a tool to analyse the gender, migration and conflict interlinkages. KOFF is happy to reflect further on this, together with the numerous civil society organizations, governmental entities and multilateral institutions contributing to gender, migration, and conflict sensitive policies and practices, both in Switzerland and abroad.

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