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Addressing the causes of migratory and refugee movements: the role of the European Union

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Introduction

Since the early 1990s several attempts have been made to develop European Union (EU) policies to address the causes of displacement and migration. All, however, have met with qualified success: the development of a coherent strategy has been hindered by the lack of structures for coordinating External Relations and Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), insufficient analytical capacity, and lack of engagement by external policy actors.¹

Nonetheless, recent developments suggest that there is more political will than ever to develop such preventive approaches. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into force in 1999, established an institutional structure that greatly facilitated coordination between JHA and External Relations. December 1998 saw the establishment of a High Level Working Group on Immigration and Asylum, tasked with preparing action plans which would include measures to address the root causes of migration and refugee flows in countries of origin.

Finally and most significantly, at the special JHA Council in Tampere, October 1999, European leaders agreed that JHA concerns should be integrated into all areas of EU policy.² These steps all implied a greater commitment to targeting external policies to the goal of preventing the causes of migration and displacement.

The notion of developing such migration prevention strategies has not been without its critics, especially amongst those working on refugee issues.³ Criticisms have focused in particular on EU attempts to cooperate with third countries to reinforce border controls, implement readmission agreements or combat trafficking and illegal migration. It is often argued that such approaches represent an attempt to contain displacement within countries or regions of origin, often to the detriment of refugee protection.⁴

Valid as this critique may be, an important element of the EU approach is targeted towards the rather different goal of mitigating the causes of forced displacement and migration pressures. This need not imply containment, but instead a policy of improving conditions in countries of origin, such that people are not compelled to move. It is on this latter set of strategies – policies for preventing the causes of migration and refugee flows – that the paper will focus.

In fact, despite the increased political will to develop such preventive approaches, there remain a number of institutional and political constraints. Four main problems appear to be impeding efforts to integrate migration and refugee prevention goals into external policy:

¹ Boswell (2002).

² The precise wording of the Conclusions were: “all competences and instruments at the disposal of the Union, and in particular, in external relations must be used in an integrated and consistent way to build the area of freedom, security and justice. Justice and Home Affairs concerns must be integrated in the definition and implementation of other Union policies and activities.” European Council (1999).

³ See, for example, Barutciski (1996) on prevention in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Hathaway (1995) on UNHCR’s involvement in prevention.

⁴ See, e.g., Scholdan (2000).

- persisting doubts about whether and under what circumstances prevention can be effective;
- limited in-house capacity and resources for analysing the causes of migration and refugee flows and appropriate policy responses;
- concerns that migration prevention may conflict with or divert resources from existing external relations and development goals; and,
- concerns about how to present such a preventive policy to partner countries who may be sensitive about making this an explicit goal of cooperation.

The first three of these obstacles are at least partly a function of the lack of research and rigorous analysis on causes and possible responses to migration and displacement pressures. To be sure, there has been extensive research on the dynamics between development and migration, as well as a number of studies on the causes of forced displacement.⁵ However, most studies suffer from one of two deficiencies.

The first is a failure to offer a systematic categorisation of the causes and dynamics of migration and refugee flows, or the temporal sequence linking these different factors. Such a typology will be indispensable as a basis for defining the nature, sequencing and possible impact of policy responses. Secondly, most studies fail to link accounts of causes to different levels and types of EU policy response. Where they do discuss policy responses, most simply give a list of possible instruments, assuming they will all have a generally benign impact.

This overlooks the question of the EU's comparative advantages in specific areas of external policy. It also assumes that migration preventive policies are compatible with existing external relations goals and priorities.⁶ Yet one of the main obstacles to developing a coherent strategy on prevention is precisely the concern by those engaged in development and external relations that the two may not be consistent.

What follows is a first attempt to set out some of the elements for an EU policy framework. The paper will start by looking at the causes and dynamics of migration and forced displacement, and categorising them according to types of cause, and phases of refugee producing situations and migration cycles. The second part will outline possible responses and consider the circumstances under which these tools could exert a preventive effect. It will look at some of the potential conflicts between migration prevention goals and other external relations objectives. The third section will consider how this as yet skeletal framework could be supplemented by further research.

A short word on definitions: of course, the usual caveats about the categories of "refugees", "forced displacement" and "voluntary economic migration" apply. In

⁵ On the relationship between migration and development, see, for example, Arnold (1998), Böhning and Schloetter-Paredes (1994), OECD (1994), Fischer, Martin and Straubhaar (1997), Martin and Taylor (2001), Hammar et al. (1997), Sassen (1988), Nyberg-Sorensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen (2002). On the causes of forced migration, see Zolberg (1983), Suhrke (1994), Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguyo (1989), Schmeidl (2001), NIDI/Eurostat (2000).

⁶ De Jong (1996), 159.

reality, people's motives for migrating often comprise a complex mixture of political, environment and economic factors. Nonetheless, the distinction between forced displacement and voluntary migration is useful for policy purposes, as measures to address the economic and political causes of migration and flight will tend to differ.

Explaining international migration and forced displacement

Before setting out a model of migration, it is useful to briefly distinguish between the sorts of explanations most often invoked. Scholars divide theories of international migration into three main types, which are not mutually exclusive.

Macro theories emphasise the structural, objective conditions which act as "push" and "pull" factors for migration. In the case of economic migration, push factors would typically include economic conditions such as unemployment, low salaries or low per capita income relative to the country of destination. Pull factors would include migration legislation and the labour market situation in receiving countries. Involuntary displacement would be explained through factors such as state repression or fear of generalised violence or civil war.

Most theorists agree that macro conditions such as these are crucial for explaining forced displacement and also so-called "pioneer" voluntary migration - i.e. the first individuals or groups of migrants from a given country or area. However, they are less well equipped in accounting for the persistence of voluntary migration despite changes in economic conditions or legislation in receiving countries. Nor can they explain why so much migration occurs from relatively few places: similar push factors exist in many potential sending areas, but while in some cases they generate mass emigration, in others there is almost no mobility.⁷

Meso theories can help explain these discrepancies. They reject the macro focus on push and pull factors, instead locating migration flows within a complex system of linkages between states.⁸ Two concepts are particularly important for meso theories: systems and networks. Migration is assumed to occur within a migration system, i.e. a group of countries linked by economic, political and cultural ties as well as migration flows.

Thus the conditions generating movement are understood as the dynamics or relations between two areas, rather than a set of objective indicators. Networks refer to a set of individual and collective actors (actual and potential migrants, their families, firms, religious or social groups, and so on) and the multiple social and symbolic ties that link them together.⁹ Once formed, networks can substantially influence the direction and volume of migration flows, providing resources that help people to move, such as information, contacts, economic and social support.

The resources that flow through networks make moving a more attractive and feasible option for other members of a network, and can generate what has been termed "chain migration": the phenomenon of serial, large-scale migration from one particular area

⁷ Faist (2001)

⁸ Bilborrow and Zlotnik (1994), 5.

⁹ Faist (2001), 51.

to another defined area. This meso level is less relevant for explaining forced displacement, although it can help explain the choice of destination for refugees - systems and networks may make particular places easier to reach or obtain protection in, or more attractive as destinations.

Micro theories focus on the factors influencing individual decisions to migrate, analysing how potential migrants weigh up the various costs and benefits of migrating. Costs could include the financial and psychological resources invested in moving and integrating in the country of destination, while benefits could include a higher salary or physical safety. Micro theories often draw on rational choice theory, which makes a number of controversial assumptions about how and why individuals take decisions.

However, the micro perspective is an important level of analysis in terms of showing how individuals internally process and assess the various conditions generating migration. It therefore provides a form of check or control for macro and meso theories, describing how individuals actually make decisions on the basis of objective or relational factors.

Summarising the relative strengths of these three approaches, one could conclude that macro theories offer most insight into the factors initially triggering "pioneer" voluntary migration, and also provide the best explanation for forced displacement. Meso theories are best at explaining the persistence of voluntary migration, and why it occurs from some areas and not others. They can also help explain the choice of destination for both voluntary migration and forced displacement. Finally, micro theories can help show how these macro and meso factors are translated into individual decisions to move.

This typology of theories provides a useful background for explaining international migration, and is a good starting point for constructing a general theory of the causes of migration. However, the task here is to examine policy responses that can help mitigate these causes. This will require a rather different sort of typology, based on the possible different levels of intervention. Here it is useful to distinguish between four different types of causal factors: root causes, proximate causes, enabling conditions, and sustaining factors.¹⁰

Root causes refer to the underlying structural or systemic conditions which provide the pre-conditions for migration or forced displacement. In terms of the theories discussed above, they combine a combination of macro and meso factors, such as economic underdevelopment, a weak state, severe social fragmentation, as well as migration systems shaping interactions between sending and receiving countries. Proximate causes refer to the immediate conditions that trigger movement, which again can be macro or meso: the escalation of violent conflict, individual persecution,

¹⁰ These are borrowed from theories of conflict prevention. Like theories of migration, conflict theories can also be divided into structural, macro theories and agent-based, micro theories. However, academics and practitioners engaged in conflict prevention have found it useful to categorise the causes of conflict according to the possible levels of intervention or policy tools to prevent conflict. The categories usually include background or root causes, which can be addressed by "structural" or "heavy" intervention; and proximate or triggering factors, which can be prevented through "operational" or "light" intervention. Both types of category are relevant for our framework. See, for example, Lund and Mehler (1999).

the collapse of local livelihoods or a new opportunity abroad. Enabling conditions render the actual journey, entry and stay in countries of destination possible. They will include factors such as resources, legislation and border controls, travel possibilities, and networks. Finally, sustaining factors encourage persistent or chain migration from particular places or countries of origin. These are almost exclusively a function of migration networks. All four categories of causes, as we shall see, imply different types of policy response.

The dynamics of conflict and repression

In the case of forced displacement, macro factors are more dominant than meso ones. Analyses of refugee producing situations have found – not surprisingly – that levels of displacement usually correspond to the level of violence in the country of origin.¹¹ However, it is difficult for external actors to intervene to address these proximate causes of displacement once state repression or violent conflict is occurring. It therefore makes sense to look at the root causes, or underlying conditions which make escalation to violence or extreme acts of state repression more likely.

What follows is a very general account of the causal dynamics that often lead to violent conflict and state repression, which in turn trigger large-scale forced displacement. The account is kept general so that it can "fit" most major refugee producing situations. Clearly, each particular case needs a far more detailed and nuanced explanation. This scheme is therefore intended as a basis for categorising levels and types of policy response, rather than a stand-alone explanation for any given conflict.

One major root cause of both violence and repression is the existence of a weak or non-consolidated state. The state's weakness may take the form of lack of external sovereignty (contested borders or neighbouring states exerting a destabilising impact); and/or lack of internal legitimacy. According to this schema, lack of legitimacy may stem from two (often mutually reinforcing) sources: the state's failure to satisfy basic socio-economic needs, or a narrow power base.

Failure to meet socio-economic needs may be caused by exogenous factors such as natural disasters, demographic pressures or the impact of global economic trends or shocks. It may also be caused or exacerbated by state mismanagement, including poor policy planning and implementation, inequitable distribution, or corruption. Lack of legitimacy may also stem from a more fundamental perception of the state as unrepresentative, often because of a narrow ethnic composition, or because of biased distribution of rights and goods between different groups. Where there are deep social cleavages along ethnic lines, grievances over resource distribution may also take the form of ethnopolitical conflict.

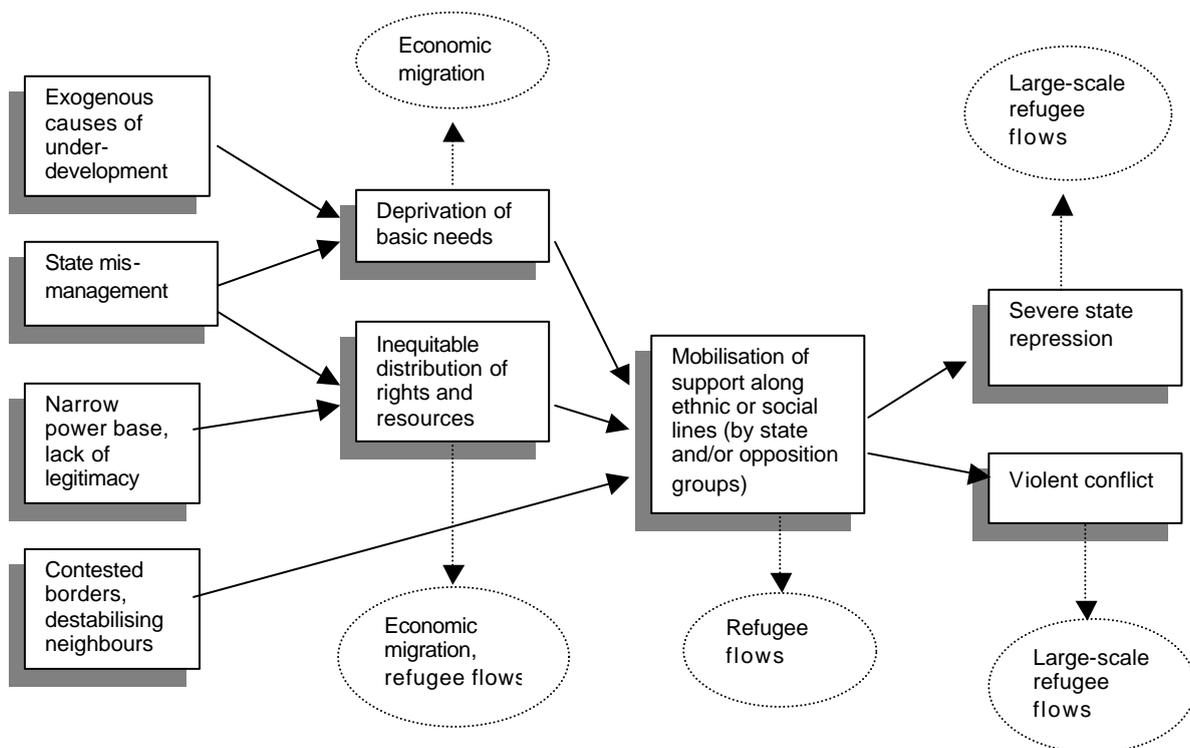
Weak states may respond to challenges to their legitimacy in different ways. One response is to seek to address grievances through policy reform, or democratisation of institutions. Alternatively, the state may consolidate its power through repression. This may involve mobilising support for a shared national identity, partly through the

¹¹ Suhrke (1994).

exclusion of “stranded” minority groups, as in the case of Ugandan Asians under Idi Amin, Kurds in Iraq, or Kosovo Albanians before 2000.¹² Repression is also likely to involve cracking down on dissidents and general infringements of civil liberties. Where the state is unable to consolidate a repressive regime in this way, a third possibility is descent into generalised violence or civil conflict. On both of the second scenarios there is likely to be forced displacement.

In the scenario of a repressive state, individual dissidents or members of particular ethnic groups may flee the regime - as in the case of Tamils in Sri Lanka, Iraqi Kurds, or opposition groups in Zimbabwe. In the second case, refugees will be fleeing civil conflict, which is likely to be fought along ethno-political lines (e.g. Bosnia, Croatia and Rwanda). Refugees may also be fleeing generalised violence caused by inter-state war or external military intervention (e.g. Kosovo, Afghanistan). These possible sequences of events leading to displacement are represented in the chart below.

Diagram 1: the dynamics of forced displacement



This categorisation of causes at different sequences of the escalation of refugee producing situations helps define the possible forms of intervention that can be undertaken to avert proximate causes of displacement. These instruments and their limitations will be considered later in the paper.

Clearly, a number of conditions will influence whether victims of repression or generalised violence are able to secure protection in a safer area of the country, a neighbouring country, or a country further afield. Enabling conditions include

¹² Faist (2000), 65.

personal resources, possibilities for travel, the existence of ties with a particular country of asylum (networks and migration systems), and legislation in the country of destination. It should be noted that in most refugee situations the majority of displaced people do not have access to the sorts of resources and information enabling them to travel to EU countries, and therefore remain in their country or region of origin.

The table below lists these different causes under the categories of root cause, proximate causes and enabling factors.

Box 1: Causes of forced displacement

Root Causes	Proximate Causes	Enabling Factors
Exogenous causes of under-development	Deprivation of basic needs	Resources and knowledge
State mismanagement (corruption, incompetence)	Mobilisation of support along ethnic lines and inequitable distribution of rights and resources	Legislation and controls in receiving countries
Narrow power base, lack of legitimacy	Severe state repression	Travel possibilities
Contested borders / Destabilising neighbours	Violent conflict	Networks

In the discussion of forced displacement it was assumed that the existence of certain objective push factors are sufficient in themselves to generate flight. In the case of voluntary economic migration, by contrast, meso-level factors play a far greater role. Potential migrants are assumed to make decisions based on a relative appraisal of conditions and opportunities in places of origin and destination. This implies that they are influenced not only by macro conditions, but that their decisions are also shaped by the existence of migration systems and networks. As with the case of forced displacement, however, it is useful to trace sequences of events leading to individual and mass emigration. Again, this will allow us to define possible levels of intervention through external policy instruments.

Root causes and proximate causes

It is now a commonplace observation that large-scale voluntary migration does not tend to occur from the poorest countries. Rather, it is far more likely to originate in countries where a significant number of people have access to sufficient resources,

information and ties with countries of destination. These enabling conditions will be less widespread in the poorest countries where people gain their livelihood through subsistence farming, with little trade or contact with other areas.¹³ But there are other reasons why a larger number of migrants come from middle income countries. Emigration originates from countries experiencing a phase of socio-economic transition involving economic restructuring.¹⁴ This is likely to disrupt patterns of agricultural or traditional industrial production, creating unemployment or reducing incomes.

Disparities of income and employment between different areas of the country are likely to generate (mainly rural-urban) migration. This is often initially internal migration, but as urban areas become saturated by migrants, it will usually evolve into international migration.¹⁵

These macro pressures linked to industrialisation may be exacerbated by other conditions. One of these is demographic factors, with population growth creating additional pressures on labour markets, increasing the scarcity of cultivable land, or creating environmental degradation. Another is the social disruption created by industrialisation, which may upset traditional social structures.

For example, the arrival of multinational companies employing local workers can create a large pool of low-skilled industrial wage labour in towns, with high migratory potential. Relocation of the firm and the ensuing redundancies could act as a trigger for emigration of these employees.¹⁶ Industrialisation is often also accompanied by the increasing participation of women in employment, implying far greater independence for women and making them more likely to emigrate to find better chances abroad.

Migration is more likely to occur between countries within a migration system, comprising relatively close trade, historical, cultural, linguistic or other links. Such links are often established with middle income countries with proximity to receiving countries, who are important trade partners or recipients of foreign direct investment, such as the countries of Central Europe and the EU, or Central America and the US. Alternatively, they may stem from a previous bilateral agreement for recruiting migrant labour, as in the case of 1950s and 1960s "guest worker" schemes between a number of European states and countries in southern Europe, Turkey and North Africa.

Former colonial ties are also significant in forging special ties, especially where the ex-colonial power has had a fairly open approach to citizenship and immigration, as in the cases of the UK and France. Industrialisation is likely to intensify already established links, with increased access to media and western goods, implying greater exposure to western culture and raising expectations about opportunities in developed capitalist states.

¹³ Fischer, Martin and Straubhaar (1997), 97-8.

¹⁴ Large-scale economic migration has often occurred from countries not in such a transition phase, but usually in the context of a migration recruitment scheme, or as chain migration once a migration network has been established.

¹⁵ Fischer, Martin and Straubhaar (1997), 98-9.

¹⁶ Sassen (1988).

Economic opportunities in destination countries are also of crucial importance in influencing decisions to migrate and the direction of flows. Thus in addition to macro push factors and migration systems, there are a number of significant "pull" factors in receiving countries.

Probably the most important of these is the widespread demand for cheap, low-skilled labour.¹⁷ As manufacturing companies have been forced to become more flexible and competitive under the pressures of globalisation, many have become increasingly dependent on the supply of low-cost, flexible labour, often employed on an irregular basis.¹⁸ Most countries are also dependent on additional low skilled seasonal labour in tourism and agriculture, as well as domestic help. Other relevant conditions in the destination country include migration legislation, such as bilateral agreements or other quota systems for labour migration.

Sustaining factors

Once initiated, migration from particular countries (or areas within them) will often be self-perpetuating. Initial pioneer migrants will be able to provide resources and support that make the move much less expensive and risky for future migrants within the same social network. In places of origin, migration of family members may be generally perceived as the best strategy for increasing incomes or social status, or for young people it may represent an opportunity for a more successful life. Hence networks not only reduce the costs and risks of migration, but can also create a "culture" of migration in sending areas.¹⁹

Such chain migration may continue despite legislation in receiving countries designed to restrict immigration. However, even this phenomenon of self-sustaining migration will decrease in due course. At some point a change in macro conditions will lead to a decline in the attractiveness of migration. There is no convincing general theory as to when this point is reached. Some scholars have suggested that emigration declines as income differentials between sending and receiving countries narrow to around 4:1, but there are other cases where it has declined at a differential of 10 or 12:1.

More generally, emigration is likely to decrease when industrial development produces expanded employment opportunities for potential emigrants and returning migrants. Under these conditions, there is also likely to be a demand for additional low-skilled labour, generating immigration from other countries. Thus in the former emigration countries of Southern Europe, and more recently in some Central European countries, a decline in emigration has been accompanied by an increase in immigration flows.

Existing legislative practice in EU states implies extremely limited possibilities for the regular migration of low-skilled workers. Where there is no possibility for entry through family reunion or a temporary labour scheme, the only other option for potential emigrants is illegal entry, or legal entry on a temporary visa and subsequent overstay. In the case of illegal entry, in most cases this will require quite substantial

¹⁷ Sassen (1996), 76, 80-2.

¹⁸ Overbeek (2002).

¹⁹ Faist (2000), 159.

financial resources to pay for forged travel documents and tickets, or to pay to be smuggled into an EU state. As widely documented, such journeys will often involve considerable risks. For those with the possibility of obtaining a temporary tourist visa (including those from CEECs into Schengen countries), the feasibility of (irregular) residence and employment will depend on contacts and networks in the country of destination.

In all cases, the costs, risks and feasibility of illegal entry or overstay and irregular employment will be substantially affected by migration control mechanisms, especially in countries of destination. Border checks, internal controls on residents and employer sanctions obviously make immigration and irregular stay more difficult. Thus restrictive legislation and its enforcement through policing, border controls and sanctions can limit these enabling conditions for migration.

However, two qualifications need to be stressed. Firstly, such control measures are essentially a blunt instrument, failing to discriminate between voluntary migrants and refugees. And secondly, measures to limit these enabling conditions do not eliminate the root and proximate causes of migration, and may therefore fail to deter people from attempting to emigrate. Instead, they will often have the unintended consequence of encouraging people to devote increased resources to more sophisticated trafficking techniques, and to take more risks in their means of travel.

Box 2: Causes of voluntary economic migration

Root Causes	Proximate Causes	Enabling/ Constraining Conditions	Sustaining Factors
Economic restructuring	Unemployment	Financial resources and information	Legislation on family reunion
Economic mismanagement	Low income	Travel routes	Migrant networks
Environmental Degradation	Labour demand in destination country	Migration control in receiving country	"Culture" of migration in place of origin
Population Growth	Migration legislation in destination country	Migration networks	
	Migration systems		

As in the discussion of forced displacement, this schema can help categorise different levels of policy response corresponding to levels of causes.

Policy responses

The list of instruments applicable to preventing the causes of migration and displacement is familiar. Various academic and EU policy documents have listed

human rights, democratisation and the rule of law, humanitarian assistance, development aid, trade policy, environment and demographics policies, security policy and conflict prevention.²⁰ However, such inventories of EU responses tend to be too general and unstructured to provide a useful framework for policy, reflecting an overly simplistic “one-size-fits-all” mentality.²¹ Instead, it is more constructive to assess possible responses on three criteria:

1. Their potential contribution to addressing the causes of displacement, as set out earlier. This will involve categorising instruments according to their impact on the different types of causes (underlying, proximate, enabling and sustaining factors), and at different phases in the refugee or migration producing situation;
2. The comparative advantage of the EU in defining and implementing the relevant policies. The question here is how far the EU has the competence and capability to exert an impact through the relevant policy instrument - especially as compared to other regional or international organisations, or EU member states.
3. Finally, it is important to consider the consistency of a migration preventive approach with other EU external relations priorities, including trade, development cooperation, common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and humanitarian assistance. Of particular importance are potential divergences in the substance of policy goals, and in priority countries and regions.

What follows in the first part of this section is a brief overview of the range of possible forms of preventive measures.²² The paper will not give an exhaustive account of how these measures can affect causes: most of the policies listed already form part of the repertoire of overseas development aid tools and foreign and security policy, and will be familiar to readers. Rather, the point is to highlight some of the factors influencing the context and phase at which they may be effective; and to assess them on the second two criteria above: in terms of the EU’s comparative advantage; and whether they converge or conflict with other external policy objectives.

Averting the causes of forced displacement

There have been few explicit attempts to address the root causes of forced displacement. One exception was the 1996 Regional Conference to address problems of refugees, displaced persons, and returnees in the CIS, organised by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Arguably, comprehensive approaches such as the International Conference on Central American Refugees from 1989-94 have also been preventive in so far as they have aimed to limit further displacement. However, most preventive efforts have been

²⁰ Spencer (1994), de Jong (1997), European Council (1992), European Commission (1991, 1994), High-Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration (1999).

²¹ Lund (2000), 13.

²² A more detailed list is available from the author.

aimed at the more immediate objectives of stopping persecution or violent conflict once it is already occurring, as in the case of Kosovo, or encouraging displaced people to stay in regions in origin, as in Bosnia, Iraq and Haiti.²³ This section will start with a brief discussion of this form of proximate prevention, then going on to consider root causes. A fuller list of possible measures is provided later.

Addressing proximate causes

Earlier two main sets of proximate causes were highlighted: severe state repression involving serious human rights abuse and the persecution of minority groups; and violent conflict. The prospects for successful intervention at this proximate phase are limited. In the case of severely repressive states, regimes with an established pattern of coercive rule or persecution of minority groups may be unresponsive to internal or external pressures for reform.

Much will depend on how the state assesses the risks and benefits of reform. This will depend on the level and internal dynamics of internal opposition; as well as the state's level of dependence on the EU for trade, development assistance, political support, or potential EU membership. Where the second factor is present, the EU will have more margin for influencing the government to introduce measures to promote democratisation, human rights, and projects to strengthen civil society.²⁴

In the case of violent conflict, intervention at this proximate phase may be even more difficult. There is ample literature and evidence of the shortcomings of military intervention to prevent or contain civil conflict, and in any case the EU currently has a limited role to play in such campaigns. The EU has had a relatively greater role in post-conflict reconstruction of the sort implemented in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo or Afghanistan. This type of reconstruction activity can facilitate refugee repatriation and reintegration, and can be understood as a form of prevention of renewed displacement – although one aimed at addressing root causes rather than proximate ones.²⁵

Finally, we should consider the prospects for humanitarian assistance aimed at providing protection and assistance in countries or regions of origin. Such a policy may be understood as prevention in the sense that it aims to remove the pressure to seek protection in EU states, through providing a high enough level of protection and assistance for IDPs or refugees in neighbouring countries.

However, again, it is important to be aware of the limitations of such approaches. First, situations such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Great Lakes have demonstrated that attempts to provide protection in or near places of origin may put displaced people in danger, or destabilise neighbouring countries. Secondly, on a number of international legal and humanitarian grounds, providing protection in regions of origin cannot be a substitute for asylum or temporary protection in European Union states.²⁶

²³ It should be noted that displacement prevention was not the sole objective of these policies.

²⁴ See also Commission (2001b)

²⁵ See Crisp (1998).

²⁶ See, e.g., IGC (1997); ECRE-USCR (2002).

Box 3: Checklist of measures to avert forced displacement

<p>Root Cause 1: Exogenous causes of under-development</p> <p>Debt relief Preferential trade terms Preventing environmental degradation and natural disasters Population policy (see also Table 4.)</p>	<p>Root Cause 2: State mismanagement (corruption, incompetence)</p> <p>Anti-corruption measures Institutional reform and capacity-building External expertise on social and economic policy Better monitoring of development aid</p>
<p>Root Cause 3: Narrow power base, lack of legitimacy</p> <p>Institutional and constitutional reforms Supporting dialogue between state and opposition groups Reform of electoral system and elections Ensure key institutions represent different minority groups Capacity-building of party system, media, civil society groups</p>	<p>Root Cause 4: Contested borders, destabilising neighbours</p> <p>Mediation International recognition Guarantee of territorial integrity</p>
<p>Root Cause 5: Deprivation of basic needs</p> <p>Food aid Development of social services and infrastructure</p> <p>Address Root Causes 1, 2 and 3.</p>	<p>Root Cause 6: Inequitable distribution of rights and goods</p> <p>Institutional reform and capacity-building External expertise on social and economic Policy Address Root Causes 2 and 3.</p>
<p>Root Cause 7: Mobilisation of support along ethnic or social lines</p> <p>Mediation between conflicting groups Developing structures for dialogue between conflicting groups Reforms to guarantee minority rights Monitoring and capacity building of independent media Institutional capacity building Strengthening civil society groups that transcend conflict lines</p>	<p>Proximate Cause 1: Severe state repression</p> <p>Institutional and constitutional reforms to guarantee human and minority rights Reform of electoral and party systems and elections Human and minority rights monitoring Education in human and minority rights Strengthening civil society Reform and capacity building of police, army, judiciary, civil service</p>

Proximate Cause 2: Violent conflict

Military intervention, peace-keeping
Post-conflict reconstruction and
reintegration of refugees
Humanitarian assistance and protection in
regions of origin

Addressing root causes

There will be better chances for successful prevention before the escalation to violent conflict or severe repression. One point of intervention is at the stage immediately before or during the mobilisation of conflict along ethnic or social lines. Social or ethnic tensions have not yet escalated into generalised conflict, nor have the lines of conflict been crystallised. Governments or opposition groups seeking to mobilise support may still be potentially open to the possibilities and benefits of seeking solutions through non-violent means.

There are a number of options for intervention at this stage, including both development and CFSP tools: in the immediate term, these include mediation, reforms to protect minority or individual rights, various financial or other incentives or threats to encourage dialogue and compromise. Longer term measures include strengthening democratic institutions and civil society initiatives. Such measures may also be effective in preventing ethnic mobilisation in the case of the earlier stages of state consolidation, where the state is struggling to find a broad enough power base, but before it has adopted a strategy of mobilising support on ethnic criteria (for example the new FRY government after October 2000).

Many of the root causes of displacement are linked to problems of deprivation and grievances over the distribution of goods and rights. Measures to address the internal sources of these problems will fall under the remit of development policy – economic policy reforms, anti-corruption measures and institutional capacity-building. Measures to address the exogenous causes of deprivation will include debt relief and trade policy. In the case of a lack of internal legitimacy or narrow power base, policies falling under the rubric of democratisation will be appropriate.

Addressing the causes of voluntary economic migration

There has been relatively greater attention devoted to policy measures to address the causes of economic migration, particularly in the US. However, despite some EU and member state attempts to address the root and proximate causes of migration, most attempts at prevention have been targeted at limiting enabling factors.

This level of causation has been the object of the most intensive efforts at preventing migration flows, with a range of EU and national measures to counter illegal migration and trafficking, reinforced border and internal controls, readmission agreements and international cooperation to combat trafficking. However, such

attempts to limit illegal movement and stay are unlikely to make a significant dent in the level of illegal migration for so long as the causes of migration are not addressed. Those who are desperate to reach Europe will probably continue to use more sophisticated and dangerous trafficking routes, or will exploit countries with weaker borders or for whom there are more relaxed entry requirements.

At best, measures to combat illegal migration and trafficking will act as a filter to make it more difficult for the vulnerable and poor to reach EU states, while those able and willing to use expensive and risky routes will continue to make the journey. Anti-trafficking measures may therefore disproportionately penalise the most vulnerable groups, including many in need of international protection.

Addressing proximate causes

A lack of employment opportunities can directly trigger migration. Indeed, the Commission has recognised that EU development aid targeted at job creation can help reduce the pressures which directly trigger migration.²⁷ Many specialists have argued that this form of development aid will not have a significant impact in the absence of broader macro-economic changes. In particular, increased foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade liberalisation have far better chances of increasing the number of jobs in the medium to long term.

However, there are two famous caveats to this. One is the so-called “migration hump” or inverted U-curve, which suggests that trade liberalisation is likely to increase migration flows in the short term, inter alia through the pressure of international competition on inefficient or subsidised industries. The second caveat is the government’s readiness and ability to introduce the necessary economic reforms to maximise the impact of FDI and free trade. This will include ensuring a stable political, legal and macro-economic environment for investors, privatisation and restructuring of industry, developing infrastructure and technology, and providing training and incentives for local entrepreneurs. Thus trade and FDI can create jobs and thereby reduce migration, but only in the medium to long term, and only in the cases of so-called “good performing” states where governments introduce the relevant reforms.²⁸

The migration hump also suggests the need to target development aid at job creation in industries and regions particularly disrupted by economic restructuring. In this context, it may be useful to compile a list of possible indicators of situations where such economic restructuring may induce migration. Examples might include where an FDI plant relocates, creating redundancies; where trade liberalisation renders a particular sector uncompetitive, threatening jobs or livelihoods; or where it triggers significant rural-urban migration.

²⁷ See, for example, the 2002-2006 Country Strategy Paper for Morocco, which has proposed a development strategy focused on Morocco’s Northern Provinces, which aims to “fixer les populations en créant de l’emploi dans les regions source principale de cette emigration”. See Euro-Med Partnership (2002).

²⁸ Nyberg-Sorensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen (2002).

Regarding low incomes, there are a number of ways the EU and its member states could help reduce migration pressures caused by income differentials. One way is to enable people to supplement incomes through temporary labour schemes. However, such schemes can also have the unintended consequence of creating networks and eventually generating chain migration. A second way of helping people supplement incomes is through encouraging more productive use of migrant remittances, for example through “matching” well invested remittances with government or external development funds.²⁹

The prospect of finding irregular employment in an EU state is a major proximate cause of migration. Measures to crack down on irregular employment such as employer sanctions have had a limited impact: the economic gains from irregular employment appear to outweigh the costs of being apprehended. If the demand for low-skilled foreign labour is unlikely to diminish, this implies the need for expanding legal schemes to ensure demand is met.³⁰

However, while such schemes would help fill gaps in labour supply, it is highly doubtful if they would reduce the levels of irregular migration. Past experience suggests that the recruitment of labour migrants has created dynamics that sustain migration flows even once such schemes are halted. These considerations make it extremely difficult to address this proximate cause of migration.

Addressing root causes

As discussed above, economic restructuring can initially contribute to migration pressures, especially in the absence of internal reform or external development assistance to mitigate the disruptive impact of transition. Hence the need for well targeted development to help offset these negative impacts. However, such measures will be unable to completely offset migratory pressures. This implies the need to accept some increase in migration in a transition period, with the expectation that development will eventually reduce migration.

Environmental degradation, natural disasters and demographic growth can all exacerbate economic problems, further fuelling emigration pressures and thus acting as a root cause of migration. European Commission Development Policy is already committed to addressing problems of environmental degradation, so a migration preventive strategy would fit existing objectives. On the question of demographic pressures, population policy can help promote family planning. In the shorter run, however, demographic growth requires above all a higher rate of job growth to match growing labour supply.³¹

²⁹ For discussions of uses of remittances, see Widgren and Martin (2002), Arnold (1992), Böhning (1984), Sørensen et al. (2002), Martin (2001), Russell (1993).

³⁰ See European Commission (2000).

³¹ It should also be noted in this context that emigration is not necessarily an effective means of reducing the problems of labour surplus or shortage of land. Emigration may reduce demographic pressures in the immediate term, but can also prevent efforts to make necessary structural adjustments to deal with the problem in the longer term. See, for example, Böhning (1984).

Box 4: Checklist of measures to avert economic migration

<p>Root Cause 1: Economic restructuring</p> <p>Employment creation in regions negatively affected by restructuring Develop indicators to warn of potential disruption in affected regions Re-training for groups negatively affected by restructuring</p>	<p>Root Cause 2: Economic mismanagement</p> <p>Anti-corruption measures Institutional reform and capacity-building External expertise on economic and social policy Better monitoring of development aid</p>
<p>Root Cause 3: Environmental degradation</p> <p>Promotion of sustainable production and biological diversity Technical assistance, training and institutional capacity-building Measures to counter desertification</p>	<p>Root Cause 4: Population growth</p> <p>Development and reform of health systems and family planning services Information and education programmes Improve reproductive health care Job creation (see below)</p>
<p>Proximate Cause 1: Unemployment</p> <p>Foreign direct investment Preferential trade terms Address Root Cause 1.</p>	<p>Proximate Cause 2 : Labour demand in destination country</p> <p>Employer sanctions Legal short-term labour migration schemes in countries of destination</p>
<p>Proximate Cause 3 : Migration legislation in destination country</p> <p>Develop EU common immigration and asylum policies</p>	<p>Proximate Cause 4 : Migration systems</p> <p>Legislation on family reunion</p>

There are limited possibilities for EU policies to influence the factors that sustain migration. Migration networks are almost by definition closed to influence from external actors. Nor would such intervention necessarily be desirable, given that networks are important for facilitating integration in destination countries, and for intensifying trade and cultural links between countries of origin and destination. Nor can EU measures have an influence on the emergence of a culture of migration.

The only sustaining factor susceptible to outside influence is legislation on family reunion in receiving countries. But policies on family reunion need to take into consideration a range of human rights and social considerations, which must be carefully balanced against the goal of reducing chain migration. Hence EU states have only limited scope for addressing sustaining factors through domestic legislation on family reunion.

The EU's comparative advantage

A number of features of EU external policy make it particularly well-suited for addressing the development-related root causes of migration and refugee movements. The EU and its member states together provide over half of all overseas development aid, while EU competence in trade policy give it a substantial role in shaping trade terms with developing countries. Moreover, the EU is often seen as a more politically neutral partner than some of its former colonial member states, and can be a welcome interlocutor for developing countries. This relatively strong role in trade and development has also shaped EU approaches in the areas of human rights and conflict prevention.

Since its inception, EU external policy has tended to be more oriented towards promoting stability, democracy and human rights through economic ties and development cooperation, rather than through sanctions or more conventional security policy. Trade and assistance combined with political conditionality - in some cases leading to full accession to the EU - is still seen as the most effective tool for conflict prevention. This emphasis on promoting peace through economic instruments has made EU institutions well-equipped to tackle the root causes of conflict. Indeed, the Commission continues to stress that economic instruments remain the EU's most powerful tools for conflict prevention.³²

The flip side of this strength as a "civilian power" is the EU's relatively weak role in security policy. The requirement of unanimity makes it difficult for the EU to reach agreement on the use of coercive methods, especially the use of military force, and makes the Union ill-equipped for crisis response.

Hence, most of the more effective and rapid responses to international and regional crises have been led by smaller groups of states acting outside of EU structures: the states involved in Operation Alba, Nato in the former Yugoslavia, or a small number of Nato states in the case of military action against Iraq or Afghanistan. This may partially change, with the potential expansion of the EU's military role through the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), but there remain serious obstacles to further development in this area.³³

This implies that (for now at least) the EU should focus efforts on its area of relative strength: trade and development cooperation, with political dialogue and conditionality to promote conflict prevention, democratisation and human rights. Examples of this kind of comprehensive approach to development and conflict prevention include the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe and the Barcelona Process with the Mediterranean countries. In other areas the EU will need to rely on other multilateral actors - OSCE activities on conflict prevention, UN agencies specialising

³² This order of importance is reflected in the Commission's recent communication on conflict prevention, which lists the relevant instruments as "development cooperation and external assistance, economic cooperation and trade policy instruments, humanitarian aid, social and environmental policies, diplomatic instruments such as political dialogue and mediation, as well as economic or other sanctions", adding as a last element that "ultimately the new instruments of ESDP" could be relevant. European Commission (2001a).

³³ White (2000), p. 116.

in relief and refugee protection, and the UN, NATO or smaller groups of countries when it comes to rapid reaction and peace-keeping.

Consistency with other external policy goals

As we saw in the discussion of measures to prevent refugee flows, the substance of a displacement preventive policy would dovetail pretty much entirely with the EU's conflict prevention strategy as elaborated by the European Commission and the CPN. This strongly implies that the best route for displacement prevention is to strengthen current conflict prevention strategies. Clearly, such a preventive policy may conflict with a number of other economic or strategic goals of external policy.

For example, addressing the external economic pressures that contribute to underdevelopment may imply granting trade concessions that conflict with the national interests of some member states; or penalising states for their human rights policies may conflict with strategic goals, for example combating terrorism. However, such conflicts already exist within EU external policy and would not be a new feature of a displacement prevention policy.

Regarding policies to prevent the causes of voluntary economic migration, we saw that there may be some conflict between short-termist preventive approaches and longer term development goals. The migration hump implies that successful development could increase migration pressures in the short to medium term.

However, as many commentators have argued, it will be vital to persist with restructuring and other reforms if the causes of migration are to be addressed in the medium to long term. Abandoning this longer-term path to sustainable development would be exceptionally short-sighted and counter-productive. Thus there should be no necessary conflict between a long-term migration preventive policy, and broader development goals.

Consistency in the regional focus of policy

Probably the major conflict between migration prevention and other external policy goals is in terms of priority regions. A policy of preventing the causes of migration and refugee flows implies targeting the most significant countries of origin, and these are not necessarily those that are most strategically or economically important, or indeed those that would be the normal focus for development aid. In what ways, then, would the selection of target countries or regions conflict with existing EU priorities?

During the Cold War, the EC's partnerships were to a large extent shaped by the bipolar balance of power. This conception of security implied a fairly broad geographical interest in a large number of developing countries throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since the end of the Cold War the focus of security concerns has shifted to problems of "spill-over" of civil conflict and instability, in the form of environmental pollution, proliferation of arms, drug and arms dealing, terrorism, illegal migration and trafficking. Meanwhile, the demise of communism led to a

renewed economic interest in emerging markets in Central and East Europe and the Balkans.

The combination of security risks and economic opportunities emanating from neighbouring countries generated a focus on so-called “proximity” policy. Since the early 1990s, this has implied greater interest in the areas directly East and South of the EU, to the detriment of many African, Asian and Latin American states. The creation of CFSP reinforced the trend, with regional approaches such as the Barcelona Process or the Stability Pact placing development firmly in a political context.

The declining interest in the ACP was reflected in the decrease in its share of EU development funds. Between 1987 and 1995 ACP’s share of total aid disbursements fell from 62.8% to 41.5%. At the same time, the share of Mediterranean countries rose from 8.3 to 10.5%, while that of the CEECs and CIS reached, respectively, 17.1 and 11.6% of the budget.³⁴

The emphasis on regional proximity may undergo a revision in the aftermath of 11 September. International terrorism represents a security threat which is not a function of geographical proximity, thus implying a shift towards regions or countries potentially producing terrorists. But this is likely to complement rather than replace the existing proximity emphasis.

In some cases, EU proximity policy will be quite compatible with the regional focus implied by a migration prevention policy. The largest flows of refugees over the past ten years have come from neighbouring regions, especially the Balkans. Large numbers of illegal migrants originate from the Maghreb, Albania and Central East Europe.

However, a significant number of immigrants and refugees also come from outside regions proximate to the EU. The top ten asylum countries of origin include Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Somalia and Zaire, while large numbers of illegal migrants travel from Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. This reflects the fact that the factors enabling migration and refugee flows into EU countries are not simply a function of geographical proximity, but also trade, historical and language ties. The implication is that a migration prevention policy would need to focus on a broader range of countries than current proximity policy.

This may be good news for the development community, implying a wider scope of priority countries and regions than those currently within the “proximity” area. However, there are two main qualifications to this.

First, displacement prevention implies prioritising countries in which a significant number of the population can reach the EU. This will not apply equally to all conflict countries. Indeed, for many protracted and violent conflicts - e.g. Myanmar, Sudan, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia, most of those displaced do not seek protection in Europe, and the numbers of asylum seekers in EU states remain relatively small. Second, prevention of economic migration also implies prioritising middle-income

³⁴ Koulaïmah-Gabriel (1997).

countries rather than the poorest, so the regional focus of development and migration prevention is unlikely to coincide.

In the context of the development debate, a migration preventive policy would imply focusing on “good performers” who will make good use of trade liberalisation, FDI and development assistance, rather than the poorest countries from which there is less economic migration. Putting this together, preventive policies are likely to be relatively skewed to countries with (a) established links (enabling factors); and either (b) conflict potential or severe repression, or (c) in a transition phase. This may imply a broader regional focus than “proximity”, but it is still a prioritisation not guided by purely development-related criteria.

Future options

The starting-point for this paper was that implementation of the Tampere Conclusions on the external dimension has been impeded by a lack of analytical capacity on migration prevention, and by concerns that such preventive approaches would divert aid from current external policy priorities. The paper hoped to make a first step towards clarifying some of the issues, by (a) providing a framework for analysing causes and responses to migration and displacement; (b) considering the EU's possible contribution to prevention; and (c) examining how such an approach would fit with other external relations goals.

Several policy implications emerge from this study, which can be divided into three themes: the potential convergence or divergence of EU external policy and migration prevention; appropriate institutional structures; and possible implications for other multilateral actors.

Divergent priorities?

A well-targeted policy to prevent the causes of forced displacement would not diverge from the EU's current conflict prevention strategy. Indeed, there is an almost total coincidence between the goals of conflict prevention and displacement prevention, and the instruments necessary to achieve them. This implies the need to strengthen existing capacity in the field of conflict prevention, building on the framework elaborated by the European Commission and the CPN.

Equally, a well-grounded and sustainable strategy to prevent the causes of voluntary economic migration should not conflict with broader development goals. Tension between the two sets of policies will only emerge if the EU adopts a short-termist approach to migration prevention, i.e. one that seeks to avoid migration flows related to transition.

Such short-termism would be ill-advised for a number of reasons: it would impede sustainable development, and would fail to address the causes of migration pressures in the long-term. Instead, an effective policy to prevent the causes of economic migration should adopt a longer-term perspective, promoting restructuring and

transition, and - where this is likely to produce migration pressures - introducing targeted schemes to create employment in affected areas.

The main potential area of conflict between migration prevention and other external relations goals concerns priority regions. A policy to prevent economic migration would be likely to focus development efforts on the "good performers", while a displacement preventive policy would tend to focus on (potential) crisis areas. In both cases, the regional focus would be on countries with established economic, historical or linguistic ties to EU states, whose emigrants would be most likely to choose the EU as a destination (i.e. enabling factors).

While this regional focus would be broader than that of the EU's current "proximity" policy, it would nonetheless not extend to all the countries prioritised on strictly development-related criteria. More specifically, it would exclude some of the poorest countries whose inhabitants are unlikely to have the resources or contacts to travel to the EU.

Institutional implications

Current EU efforts to develop a migration prevention policy have followed two different institutional paths. The first is the High Level Working Group (HLWG), acting under the auspices of the Council rather than the Commission. The HLWG has developed bold recommendations, but suffers from a lack of experience of EU external policy, a cumbersome institutional structure, and insufficient analytical capacity. More fundamentally, it acts outside normal Commission structures for formulating and implementing external policy, and as such will inevitably create problems of consistency and coordination with other EU external relations activities.

The second institutional route is through attempts to integrate policy between different DGs within the Commission, essentially JHA, Development and External Relations. This represents a far more efficient framework for coordinating policy, and should be the basis for future efforts to develop the external dimension of JHA.

However, attempts to coordinate policies within the Commission face a number of constraints, as outlined in the introduction: a lack of analytical capacity, concerns about conflicting goals and priorities, and concerns about the political sensitivity of pursuing preventive policies. This paper has suggested how a more systematic policy framework could help address some of these obstacles, through:

- helping the Commission to develop a more comprehensive and systematic approach to migration and refugee prevention, through a policy framework that categorises causes, phases of escalation, and possible policy responses, and which can be used as a starting-point for specific country analyses;
- helping to discern the EU's potential contribution to preventive policies for each type of cause or phase of escalation, and defining where it should cooperate with other partners; and,

- helping to define possible areas of conflict or overlap between migration prevention and other external relations goals. This should provide a basis for building on areas of coincidence between the two, and considering ways of overcoming possible tensions.

In addition to building analytical capacity in this way, the Commission could also consider setting up a special inter-DG working group to plan and oversee the integration of this approach into external policies.

Implications for other multilateral actors

The analysis and recommendations in this paper have focused on the EU, but there are clearly relevant conclusions to be drawn for other actors working in the areas of development assistance, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. The perhaps somewhat banal point to reiterate here is that successful conflict preventive and development activities clearly can help mitigate the causes of displacement and migration.

In terms of economic migration, long-term migration prevention strategies should not conflict with broader sustainable development programmes. However, development strategies may generate increased economic migration in a transition period. Thus tensions between the two sets of goals – development and migration prevention – are most likely to arise if the latter is targeted to address immediate triggering factors (such as unemployment linked to transition) rather than root causes.

In the case of forced displacement, the coincidence of conflict prevention and refugee preventive goals is even clearer. This implies that the increasing political interest in measures to prevent the causes of forced displacement on the part of western industrialised states need not distort development and conflict prevention programmes. Rather, it may provide the impetus for devoting additional resources to such programmes.

The main caveat here concerns possible divergences in terms of regional priorities. More thought needs to be given as to whether a migration preventive focus would divert resources from needy states or regions which are not major source countries for migrants and refugees.

The implications of all this for UNHCR and other agencies working with refugees are that they should be receptive to the root cause prevention agenda, and should encourage industrialised states to invest in “structural” conflict prevention. This implies not merely intervening at the more problematic phase of ethnic mobilisation or conflict escalation, where there are limited prospects for addressing the causes of conflict or repression. Rather, the onus should be on earlier preventive engagement, at the phase before economic deprivation, social tensions and grievances and political instability have developed into violent conflict or state repression.

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