



“Refugees and the Regional Dynamics of Peacebuilding” New York, 3 and 4 May 2010

Organized by the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation & The International Peace Institute

Background: Refugee Movements and Peacebuilding

By their very nature, refugee movements regionalize the effects of conflict as they spill over into neighboring territories. This is particularly true in the world's poorest and most unstable regions, where countries like Guinea, Tanzania, and Pakistan have opened their borders to hundreds of thousands of refugees. Host countries may in some instances already be involved—either directly or indirectly—in the conflict, but refugee flows can also generate instability in neighboring countries and trigger intervention.

Recent research has demonstrated that the mass arrival and prolonged presence of refugees in neighboring countries can have a negative impact on peace: if there are armed elements within the refugee population acting as spoilers to a peace process; if there are pressures from the host country for early and unsustainable repatriation; if refugees are politicized either before or during exile; and if refugees create a major strain on host country capacity. But the reverse is also true, in that there are cases where host countries have been inspired to play a positive role in finding solutions to the crisis in order to resolve the refugee situation. Likewise, refugees may contribute to peacebuilding in their country of origin, especially when they benefit from training while in exile.

Yet it is striking that the question of refugees has been largely absent from recent debates on peacebuilding. Contemporary policy and research debates on peacebuilding have generally addressed refugees as a matter of secondary concern, focusing instead on strategies in the country of origin to consolidate peace and prevent a return to conflict. It can be challenging enough to ensure that security and development actors are on the same page when it comes to devising peacebuilding responses; humanitarian actors are often left out of policy discussions at the strategic level, and refugee issues tend to be treated as programmatic or operational concerns.

A separate, but related, problem is the tendency for peacebuilding discussions to focus almost exclusively on the country in question; for example, external partners tend to engage with the government and people of a post-conflict country to facilitate peacebuilding, and neglect the needs of refugee-hosting countries and communities in the region. More attention needs to be paid to the regional effects of conflict, including political interference from neighboring states, the movements of armed groups, the spread of small arms, and the resource burdens created by large scale displacement of civilian populations. In this context, one frequently overlooked challenge is the need for a regional approach in managing the often lengthy and complicated task of supporting refugees in their host countries, and finding a solution to the plight of refugees.

Failure to effectively deal with these issues can have long-term implications for security and development in both home and host countries.

International assistance to refugee management can be seen in three dimensions. The refugees themselves, and their needs while in exile are the first dimension. Finding solutions for refugees, including integrating them into their own communities in an appropriate way is the second dimension. The third, and frequently neglected, dimension is the fact that for host countries, there is no security, development, or humanitarian instrument to assist communities who are often devastated socially, economically, and environmentally by the sudden influx of massive numbers of non-citizens. And, little is understood about how the presence of refugees can drive host country involvement, whether positive or negative, in neighboring conflict situations. This has been a major gap in the international tool-kit.

This seminar aims to bring together policy experts and practitioners from the humanitarian and peacebuilding communities for a focused discussion on the regional dynamics of refugees, conflict, and peace, and the need for integrated *political* strategies for peacebuilding that address these dynamics.

A number of questions will be addressed:

- What lessons can be drawn from historical and contemporary cases of protracted refugee situations and peacebuilding, including: Burundi/Tanzania, Sierra Leone/Guinea, Sudan/Chad, Afghanistan/Pakistan, Central America, Sudan/Kenya?
- What lessons have been learned from refugee returns and reintegration strategies? How can we balance the need to address host country concerns while at the same time ensuring that communities and institutions in the country of origin are capable of reabsorbing refugee populations and providing for their needs?
- How has the presence of large refugee populations been the cause of host country involvement in neighboring crises, either positively or negatively?
- How can the regional dynamic be appropriately addressed in the context of strategic approaches being developed between the post-conflict country and its international partners? How can strategies for integrated responses be pursued within the UN's evolving peacebuilding architecture?

***** Program *****

All events will take place at the International Peace Institute:
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May 3, 2010Nk

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Keynote Remarks followed by a reception
H.E. Mr. Martin Palouš, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the
United Nations, Vice-Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission
H.E. Dr. Augustine Mahiga, Permanent Representative of Tanzania to the UN
Introduction by Dr. Edward C. Luck, Senior Vice President for Research and
Programs, International Peace Institute

May 4, 2010

8:00 a.m. Breakfast

8:30 a.m. Welcome
Dr. Terje Rød-Larsen, President, International Peace Institute
Dr. Pierre-Gerlier Forest, President, The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation

9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. **Panel I: Cases of Protracted Refugee Situations: Host Country Experiences**

Chair: Ambassador Robert Fowler, Former Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations,
2008 Trudeau Mentor

The first session will take stock of what we know about how countries hosting refugees have managed these challenges. What are some of the political, economic, environmental and social impacts that the absorption of refugees has had on hosting countries? What positive (and negative) strategies have been employed by these countries (at different levels of government, by communities, and by civil society) to cope with this influx of refugees? If relevant, were there ways that local, national, and regional actors operated that exacerbated the plight of the refugees? What lessons can be learned from each case?

Panelists

- Mr. Joel Charny, Vice President Policy, Refugees International
- Ms. Sarah Kamal, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2007 Trudeau Scholar
- Mr. Stanlake J.T.M. Samkange, Representative and Country Director, United Nations World Food Programme, Uganda Country Office

10:30 a.m.-11 a.m. Break

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. **Panel II: Regional Approaches to Managing Refugee Returns and Reintegration**

Chair: Mr. Alex Neve, Amnesty International Canada, 2008 Trudeau Mentor

This session will take stock of lessons learned from refugee returns and reintegration strategies. How can host country concerns be addressed while at the same time ensuring that communities and institutions in the country of origin are capable of reabsorbing refugee populations and providing for their needs? How can we ensure that attention does not rapidly shift to peacebuilding in the country of origin at the expense of refugee assistance programs in neighboring countries? What regional mechanisms and approaches have been developed to address refugee crises and how can these be strengthened?

Panelists

- Dr. James Milner, Carleton University, 2003 Trudeau Scholar
- Dr. Sarah Kenyon Lischer, Wake Forest University
- Dr. Jeff Crisp, Head of Policy, UNHCR (Geneva)

12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m. Lunch

2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m. **Panel III: Peacebuilding Strategies to Refugee Situations**

Chair: Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, PBSO

This session will focus on strategies that international, regional, and national actors can develop to ensure closer consideration of the links between protracted refugee situations and peacebuilding. What are institutional and political barriers to ensuring more effective collaboration between security, development and humanitarian actors, and how can these be addressed? What are possible entry points for the UN's peacebuilding architecture in informing an integrated response?

Panelists

- Mr. Udo Janz, Director, UNHCR (New York)
- Dr. Carolyn Makinson, Executive Director, Women's Refugee Commission
- Mr. Stan Nkwain, UNDP

3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. **Panel IV: Closing Session**

Chairs:

Ms. Carolyn McAskie, Former Assistant Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support, 2009 Trudeau Mentor

Dr. Edward C. Luck, Senior Vice President for Research and Programs, International Peace Institute

This session will focus on strategies for implementing policy prescriptions highlighted at the workshop.