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Human Development:  
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Mixed Migration**

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# Managing mobility for human development: the growing salience of mixed migration

Nicholas Van Hear<sup>1</sup>  
with Rebecca Brubaker and Thais Bessa

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# Abstract

In the analysis of migration a basic distinction is often made between those who chose to move and those who are forced to – that is, between ‘voluntary’ and ‘forced’ migrants. This distinction is maintained in the policy world, where the governance of international migration is shaped by the conceptual distinction between ‘voluntary’ and ‘forced’ migration as mutually exclusive categories. In reality of course the distinction is far from clear-cut. Migration can be ‘mixed’ in several senses: motivations may be mixed at the point of making the decision to move, when there are often combinations of choice and compulsion in play; people may travel with others in mixed migratory flows; motivations may change en route; and people may find themselves in mixed communities during their journeys or at their destination. This paper explores the connections between mixed migration and human development, understood as the expansion of capabilities and choice (Sen 1999). It first clarifies some of the key concepts in the migration discourse, particularly the role of choice and compulsion in migration, before exploring the emergence of the notions of ‘mixed migration’ and the ‘migration-asylum nexus’ in the policy arena. The paper then turns to some of the manifestations of ‘mixed migration’ and the conditions migrants encounter in such migration streams. It next considers how mixed migration and migration policies – or ‘migration governance’ -- encounter one another. Finally, some policy conclusions are drawn from the evidence presented, pointing to the idea that the transnational practices that arise from mixed migration may constitute a ‘durable solution’ in settings of conflict and displacement.

Keywords: mixed migration, force and choice, refugees, migration policy, development.

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## **Introduction**

Today, perhaps even more so than in the past, migration features a bewildering variety of forms and types of movement. The term 'migrant' can encompass highly diverse types of people on the move, both within and between countries: among them are permanent emigrants and settlers; temporary contract workers; labour, professional, business and trader migrants; students; refugees and asylum-seekers; people who move from rural settings to cities, or from smaller towns to larger ones; people who seek safety from conflict within their own countries; and arguably even humanitarian and aid workers, cross-border commuters and tourists. Moreover, people often shift between these categories: they may enter a country as students, tourists or visitors, for example, but then illegally overstay, ask for asylum or seek permanent settlement, and eventually become naturalised as citizens; and internal migrants driven by force or in search of opportunity may in time cross state borders and become international migrants. How is this great diversity to be made sense of, and what does it mean for human development?

In the analysis of migration a basic distinction is often made between those who chose to move and those who are forced to – that is, between 'voluntary' and 'forced' migrants. This distinction is maintained in the policy world, where the governance of international migration is shaped by the conceptual distinction between 'voluntary' and 'forced' migration as mutually exclusive categories. In reality of course the distinction is far from clear-cut. For those who are classed as 'voluntary', especially towards the lower levels of the socio-economic scale – such as labour migrants from lower income backgrounds -- there may be only limited choices available. Conversely, those classed as refugees or asylum seekers – that is 'forced migrants' -- may look to expand their life opportunities, especially once they have reached a place of relative safety; in a way they may transmute from refugees to economic or betterment migrants. Often poverty, inequality and conflict co-exist, so that much migration in many parts of the world is 'mixed' in nature, both in terms of motivations and the character of the flows. The reasons for movement are sometimes as mixed and complex as the people who migrate: those who flee a country where conflict, persecution, discrimination and human rights abuse are rife, for example, may also be trying to escape dire economic circumstances -- which themselves feed into such conflict, persecution, discrimination and human rights abuse. Similarly, an internally displaced person

may become a refugee in a neighboring state, only to move on to another country as an economic migrant once relative security is assured. Such shifts in migration category and sometimes in legal status influence the livelihood strategies that may be pursued and ultimately human development outcomes.

This paper explores the connections between mixed migration and human development, understood as the expansion of capabilities and choice (Sen 1999). It first clarifies some of the key concepts in the migration discourse, particularly the role of choice and compulsion in migration, before exploring the emergence of the notions of ‘mixed migration’ and the ‘migration-asylum nexus’ in the policy arena. The paper then turns to some of the manifestations of ‘mixed migration’ and the conditions migrants encounter in such migration streams. The paper next considers how mixed migration and migration policies – or ‘migration governance’ -- encounter one another. Finally, some policy conclusions are drawn from the evidence presented, pointing to the idea that the transnational practices that arise from mixed migration may constitute a ‘durable solution’ in some conflict settings.

## **Clarifying concepts**

### *Force, choice and agency*<sup>1</sup>

A simple disaggregation of migratory movements might come up with five essential components of migration (Van Hear 1998). All migrations involve some kind of **outward** movement, from a place of origin or residence to some other place. This movement necessarily involves some kind of **inward** movement as a concomitant - people leaving a place must arrive at some other place, even if only temporarily. Subsequently there might be a **return** to the place of origin or previous residence; this likewise involves **inward** movement as a concomitant. Alternatively, following an **outward** movement, there might be **onward** movement to some other place; this must also involve **inward** movement. In addition to these four essential components of movement, account must be

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<sup>1</sup> This section draws on Van Hear 1998: 41-47.

taken of another component -- non-movement, or **staying put** -- for almost all migrations involve leaving behind a portion of the family, community or population.

Each of these components involves greater or lesser degrees of choice and coercion, and are conventionally portrayed as voluntary or forced movements. However, as already noted, the categories 'voluntary' and 'forced' are unsatisfactory and may be misleading, particularly if conceived as mutually exclusive. It is increasingly recognised that few migrants are wholly voluntary or wholly forced. Almost all migration involves some kind of compulsion; at the same time almost all migration involves choices. 'Economic' migrants make choices, but they do so within constraints. For example, what is the balance of force and choice for the supposed 'voluntary', 'economic' migrant who 'chooses' to seek work in her country's capital or abroad, but whose child would otherwise die if she does not earn money to pay for medical treatment? 'Forced' migrants likewise make choices, within a narrower range of possibilities; but even in the most dire circumstances, there is still some choice, since some may choose to stay and suffer starvation or violence rather than leave their homes. Nevertheless, even if all migration involves choices, some migrants have more choices than others.

These dimensions of force and compulsion and of options and strategies may be presented as lying along an axis ranging from 'choice' or 'more options' at one end to 'little choice' or 'few options' at the other. A useful paradigm along these lines was suggested by Richmond (1994), who recognises

a continuum at one end of which individuals and collectivities are proactive and at the other reactive. Under certain conditions, the decision to move may be made after due consideration of all relevant information, rationally calculated to maximise net advantage, including both material and symbolic rewards. At the other extreme, the decision to move may be made in a state of panic during a crisis that leaves few alternatives but escape from intolerable threats (Richmond 1994: 55).

Richmond suggests that between these two extremes is

a large proportion of people crossing state boundaries who combine characteristics, responding to economic, social and political pressures over which they have little

control, but exercising a limited degree of choice of the selection of destinations and the timing of their movements (Richmond 1994: 61).

With the 'force' and 'choice' dimensions conceived in this way as a continuum, the five elements introduced above can be refined: outward movement; inward movement for arrivals in a new society; return; onward movement to cover third country resettlement, dispersal and diaspora formation; and staying put to cover those who do not or cannot migrate. Each of these other components of migration can involve greater or lesser degrees of choice and force.

It might seem odd to include those who stay put in consideration of migration, but they are an essential element in a migration order: those who stay may support migrants abroad, especially in the period immediately after departure, or they may be supported by the migrant members of their communities, particularly after such members become established abroad. Staying put may be by choice or a matter of compulsion.

Disaggregating movement in this way may help to resolve the problematic dichotomy between 'economic' or 'voluntary' migration and 'forced' migration that dogs theory, policy and practice in the migration field. Separation of movement into outward and inward components can reveal differences in motivation. Thus while **outward** movement may be forced, precipitated by persecution, conflict, war or some other life-threatening circumstance, **inward** or **onward** movement, including the choice or determination of the destination, may be shaped by economic, livelihood, betterment, or life-chance considerations. At some point then, forced migration may transmute into economic or livelihood migration, and it is this recognition that forms the basis for the discourse on 'mixed migration' explored further below.

### *Choice and capabilities in the migratory context*<sup>2</sup>

In the previous section it was suggested that many if not most migration streams involve migrants with varying degrees of choice and who experience varying degrees of compulsion. What then determines the degree of choice people have when deciding to move or stay put? As with other

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<sup>2</sup> This section draws on Van Hear 2006a: 127-129.



social phenomena, this is shaped by the dialectic between ‘structure’ -- crudely speaking, the contextual conditions or environment -- and ‘agency’ – the capacity and willingness of people to take action. The playing out of this dialectic can be usefully framed in terms of the possession or disposal of different forms of ‘capital’, as elaborated by Bourdieu and other analysts.

As is well known, Bourdieu distinguishes a number of broad categories of capital:

(F)irstly, *economic* capital, in various kinds; secondly, *cultural* capital or better, informational capital, again in various kinds; and thirdly two forms of capital that are very strongly correlated, *social* capital, which consists of resources based on connections and group membership, and *symbolic* capital, which is the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu 1987: 4)

Elaborating the notion of social capital, Bourdieu suggests

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network....The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of capital ...possessed by a given agent, or even by the whole set of agents to whom he is connected (Bourdieu 1986: 248-249)

The various forms of capital are not evenly distributed:

Two individuals endowed with an equivalent overall capital can differ ...in that one holds a lot of economic capital and little cultural capital while the other has little economic capital and large cultural assets (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 99).

Moreover, capital can be acquired, transmitted and converted. Of most relevance for the purposes of this discussion is that one form of capital – economic, social, symbolic, cultural, political etc. – can be converted into another (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119n).

These notions of classes and of different endowments of capital that can be transmitted or converted can be usefully applied to the migration arena. Migration requires the accumulation or possession of amounts of capital in various combinations: economic/financial capital, cultural/informational capital, and social and human capital. This is even more the case for international than for internal migration, since navigating the migration regime to particular

destinations requires different amounts, forms and combinations of capital. For some destinations a certain amount of economic capital may be sufficient; in other cases cultural/informational capital and social capital will also be required. Thus only those who are endowed with certain volumes of capital in certain compositions or proportions, or who can convert other forms of capital into the required forms in the required compositions, can undertake international migration. The capacity for a would-be migrant to navigate the international migration order will be largely shaped by his or her endowments of economic and social capital, or the amount of economic, social and other capital a would-be migrant can call upon (Van Hear 2006a).

Hypothetically, someone with few financial assets but well endowed with cultural or social capital might be able to get as far as someone with financial resources but few social connections. Furthermore someone endowed with little economic capital but plentiful cultural, social or symbolic capital may be able to convert the latter forms into the volume of economic capital needed to migrate (ibid: 129). Re-casting all of this in terms of Sen's capabilities approach, having combinations of capital at their disposal shapes people's capacity to migrate, and thereby may lead 'to the expansion of [their] "capabilities".... to lead the kinds of life they value – and have reason to value' (Sen 1999: 18).

### **'Mixed migration' and the 'migration-asylum nexus' in the policy arena**

As the above section showed, researchers and analysts pointed increasingly to the blurring of or continuum between 'forced' and 'voluntary' migration from the 1990s (Richmond 1994, Van Hear 1998). This perspective was increasingly taken up in the policy arena, where it found expression as concern with 'mixed migration' and the somewhat grander term the 'Migration-Asylum Nexus', particularly after around 2000.<sup>3</sup>

While they had some currency beforehand, the terms 'mixed migration' and the 'migration-asylum nexus' took hold during the Global Consultations on International Protection, launched

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<sup>3</sup> This section draws on and updates Castles and Van Hear 2005.

by UNHCR in 2000 against the background of what the organisation saw as a crisis in international protection of refugees at the time of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention. A major part of that crisis was the increasing perception by the governments and publics of western countries that large scale abuses of the asylum system were taking place: the view was that asylum seekers were really economic migrants in disguise. The exploration of the ‘nexus between migration and asylum’ (UNHCR/ILO 2001: 1) was in part undertaken to address such anxieties, and spawned a number of position papers drafted jointly by UNHCR, ILO, IOM and other agencies (UNHCR/ILO 2001 and UNHCR 2001). The notion found its way into the outcome of the Global Consultations, the *Agenda for Protection*, agreed in 2002, under which states reaffirmed their support for the 1951 Convention and pledged support for the goal of ‘protecting refugees within broader migration movements’ (UNGA 2002: 10).

This became a key concept in subsequent policy statements. In its report to the UN General Assembly of October 2003, under the heading of the ‘Asylum and Migration Nexus’, UNHCR noted:

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the attitude of many Governments towards asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants has changed. Their new policies have sought to respond to increasing numbers of asylum-seekers and to the challenges posed as a result of mixed flows, where asylum-seekers are found alongside labour migrants. With many channels of legal migration virtually closed, some migrants fall prey to smugglers and traffickers who misuse the asylum channel as a viable means of entry....UNHCR must strive to ensure that the needs of refugees and asylum seekers are properly met within the broader context of migration management....

Although different in scope and nature, efforts to develop better systems for migration and for asylum go hand in hand. Asylum systems cannot function effectively without well-managed migration; and migration management will not work without coherent systems and procedures for the international protection of refugees. Asylum and managed migration systems should, however, be based on a clear distinction between the different categories of persons...

It is important to maintain the credibility of asylum systems and regular migration channels. Factors which could contribute to this objective in the asylum area include

simplifying asylum procedures, strengthening protection capacities in host countries, as well as promoting durable solutions (UNGA 2003: 11).

This was a fairly succinct statement of the migration-asylum nexus problematic: it also showed the extent to which UNHCR had endorsed the related and wider notion of ‘migration management’. This was also seen in the incorporation of such ideas into a UNHCR major policy initiative, Convention Plus, whose aims including addressing mixed flows and irregular secondary movements of refugees and asylum seekers (Castles and Van Hear 2005).

The notion also found organisational expression in the European Union, where the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration (HLWG) was set up in 1999 to draw together member government representatives on justice and home affairs, foreign, security, development and economic policy. The HLWG’s responsibility was to develop a framework across such different government interests to improve the EU’s approach to asylum and migration policy. While the brief of the HLWG was to seek comprehensive approaches – including for example addressing the root causes of forced movements – in practice the thrust of its approach was the containment of migration, and the cajoling of countries of origin and transit through aid to take steps towards that end (Castles and Van Hear 2005). Immigration and asylum were conflated in major policy statements, such as the conclusions to the Tampere and Seville summits of 1999 and 2002, and the notion underlay policy trends in relations with ‘third countries’, often in the developing world and notably with respect to readmission agreements for rejected asylum seekers and other returnees (Castles and Van Hear 2005; Boswell 2003).

The growing salience of the notions of mixed migration and the migration-asylum nexus can therefore be seen as an outcome of pressure from two directions. The first was scholarly analysis in the 1990s that highlighted the increasingly common roots of movement, where economic factors were often linked with human rights abuses and violence: this analysis became increasingly integrated into policy circles. The second thrust was recognition or acknowledgement by multilateral agencies that governments in the ‘global north’ (or at least their Home or Interior Ministries) and their publics did have a case that the asylum system was being abused and used for immigration purposes on a substantial scale. Not surprisingly the

human rights and refugee lobbies did not like this – while acknowledging the pointers from migration research that the motivations for movement were mixed. The adoption of the notions of ‘mixed migration’ and the ‘migration-asylum nexus’ by the multilateral aid and relief agencies can then be seen as a liberal response to state concerns (indeed to try to take the steam out of them), as well as to the findings of researchers on refugees and forced migration.

UNHCR developed its viewpoint on mixed migration in a series of policy documents drafted in 2006-07 (UNHCR 2006a and b, 2007a and b). Some key points of these documents include:

- Human rights are applicable to all people on the move. Human rights instruments are universal in their application and apply to both citizens and non-citizens, including those who have moved in an irregular manner.
- Refugees are a distinct category of people by virtue of their need for international protection and have specific rights and needs.
- Refugee protection and migration management are distinct yet complementary activities. The international community needs to develop responses which combine a coherent approach to the management of migration with effective protection of refugees.
- UNHCR’s mandate is to provide protection and solutions for refugees and other forcibly displaced people. It does not consider itself to be a migration organisation, nor concerned with activities which fall within the field of migration management. However UNHCR recognises the intersection of refugee and migratory movements, so that it is both necessary and desirable to engage with migration issues that impact on the organisation’s mandate to uphold refugee protection and pursue solutions.
- Irregular migration can place serious strains on national asylum systems and provoke public hostility towards foreign nationals, thereby undermining effective refugee protection. However, measures introduced by states to curb irregular migration must not prevent refugees from gaining access to asylum procedures.
- UNHCR’s mandate does not normally extend to an engagement with migrants without a valid claim to international protection, but the organisation may use its good offices to ensure that other actors assume responsibility for the welfare of migrants who become destitute or vulnerable to human rights abuses.

The circumstances under which UNHCR might become engaged in broader migration issues included then:

- Mixed motivations: the recognition that people impelled to leave their countries may be driven by a combination of fears, uncertainties, hopes and aspirations that may be difficult to unravel.
- Mixed migration: where refugees and other migrants move alongside each other, making use of the same routes and means of transport and engaging the services of the same smugglers.
- Onward or secondary movement: where people who have secured protection in one state move on to another country, or where asylum seekers moved through a number of different countries (some of which may be considered safe) before submitting a claim for refugee status.
- The change in character of movement from what was principally a refugee exodus to more mixed movements as fewer people moved to seek protection and more and more moved for other reasons, such as betterment.

In 2008 UNHCR reconsidered its perspective on the Migration-Asylum Nexus and began to distance itself from the term, if not its content (Crisp 2008). While the organisation still recognised the importance of mixed migration both in terms of global patterns of mobility and its particular mandate, it was felt that the discourse associated with Migration-Asylum Nexus could compromise UNHCR's core purpose of refugee protection. The 'more prosaic notion of 'refugee protection and durable solutions in the context of international migration'' was now preferred (Crisp 2008: 3).

The principal reasons for this shift were that the Migration-Asylum Nexus discourse had become too closely associated with the agenda of the migrant-receiving countries of the 'global north' -- concerns with irregular migration, control of borders, unfounded asylum claims, the return of asylum seekers whose claims for refugee status had been rejected, and so on -- an agenda that could conflict with the UNHCR's mandate to protect those fleeing harm. Likewise, the Migration-Asylum Nexus had become too closely associated with movement from the 'global south' to the 'global north', reinforcing the view that the world's most important migration issue

was movement of people from poorer parts of the world to more affluent countries. In reality, ‘some of the largest migration flows, and the vast majority of the world’s refugees, are to be found in developing regions’ (Crisp 2008: 3).

Nevertheless the need to address refugee protection and solutions within the context of the wider international migration arena remained. UNHCR found itself ‘engaged in a difficult balancing act’:

On one hand, the organisation recognises the need to underline the distinctive status, rights and obligation of refugees, and is sensitive to charges that it wishes to extend its mandate to broader migration issues that lie beyond its legitimate concern. At the same time, UNHCR is aware that human mobility is growing in scope, scale and complexity, and acknowledges that other stakeholders, especially states, increasingly regard the movement of refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants as part of a single (and often unwanted) phenomenon (Crisp 2008: 9).

While the Migration-Asylum Nexus has perhaps become somewhat jaded and compromised as a policy term, the phenomenon it was meant to account for – mixed migration – remains firmly on the policy agenda.

### **Mixed migration: evidence and outcomes**

As the preoccupations of the EU’s High Level working group and other agencies and UNHCR’s misgivings showed, mixed migration and the migration-asylum nexus were seen as policy issues particularly for affluent, industrialized countries of the global north. But as has been shown in the discussion on force, choice and agency (pages 2-6), mixed migration features at all stages of the migration process. It is manifested in<sup>4</sup>:

- The closely related causes of forced and voluntary migration in countries of origin, especially the linkages between underdevelopment, impoverishment, economic dislocation, weak states, human rights abuse and conflict.

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<sup>4</sup> The following points draw on analysis of mixed migration developed jointly with Stephen Castles.

- The ‘mixed motivations’ of many migrants as a result of this: people usually move for a mixture of reasons – among them persecution and violence, lack of means of livelihood and opportunity, personal circumstances and so on. Often there is a configuration of such different reasons.
- Changes in motivations in the course of migration: while refugees flee their countries to escape violence and persecution, once in a country of asylum, they also start to prioritise rebuilding livelihoods for their families, as well as to support those they may have left behind.
- The close links between refugees and economic migrants in some transit countries, where mixed populations of migrants gather, are often stranded and suffer similar privations.
- The increasing similarities in the migratory process for both ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ migrants: as legal migration becomes more restricted, both ‘voluntary’ migrants and ‘forced’ migrants are driven to resort to agents and smugglers in the burgeoning migration industry to cross borders.
- Refugees and labour migrants can have similar experiences in receiving countries: in such countries migrants live in diverse social worlds which include people who have come to the country by many different routes and channels. Claims that asylum seekers are often really economic migrants lead to a climate of suspicion and exclusion, and refugees and labour migrants may make use of the similar networks to survive and cope against the background of exclusion.
- The experience of return or repatriation may be similar: there tends to be a conflation in the minds of policy makers and the public at large of the repatriation of rejected asylum seekers (or the failure of such removals) and the return of other kinds of migrants, including those coming for economic reasons.

Some of these experiences and dimensions are elaborated below drawing on case material which shows how refugee migration can transmute into economic or labour migration and vice versa.

The ways in which refugee and labour/economic migration intermesh include:

- Utilization of the same or similar routes and channels
- Labour migration as poorer households’ asylum migration
- Refugees transmuted into economic migrants by entering the labour market



### *Use of the same or similar routes and channels*

To reach safety, refugees fleeing conflict often use prior routes established for the purposes of labour migration or trade. This is particularly apparent in the case of Afghans fleeing their country to Pakistan and Iran. The dominant image of migration to Pakistan is that of refugees moving out of Afghanistan and living in camps in Pakistan or self-settled in towns, with occasional periods of return during lulls in the conflict, followed by fresh exodus. Closer scrutiny reveals a more complex picture, with refugee movements tied up with earlier or concurrent migration for work or trade. For many decades, a substantial proportion of the Afghan population has looked for income earning opportunities in Pakistan and Iran, particularly during drought or poor harvests. Many of those who fled conflict in the 1980s and especially the 1990s used these prior labour migration routes and trading networks. Among the Hazaras studied by Monsutti (2005), for example, in tandem with the effects of war, ‘a seasonal migratory cycle has established itself over several decades, as many men from southern Hazarajat go to work each winter in the coal mines near Quetta and return in early spring to resume their farming activity’ (Monsutti 2005: 101). These movements have antecedents in migrations associated with British and Russian imperial rivalry in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Movement for refuge in the Afghan context thus tends to be part of earlier and concurrent movements of labour migrants, traders and others.

The converse pattern – protracted refugees transmuting into labour migrants – is also common. This is particularly the case among Afghan refugees in Iran, who over the years have effectively become migrant workers. Unlike those in Pakistan, very few Afghans in Iran live in refugee camps.

Most are scattered through Iranian society, often in small teams of workers who move around from one building site to another....Few Afghans can ever hope to settle in the Islamic Republic [of Iran] with their family. Rather, there is a to-and-fro movement of individuals in search of work opportunities that the war closed to them in Afghanistan. The Afghan migration to Iran therefore has many elements of work migration, but it

cannot be explained without reference to the insecurity prevailing in Afghanistan since the late 1970s (Monsutti 2005: 127).

Underlining this point, Monsutti notes, 'The situation of the Hazaras in Iran perfectly illustrates the difficulty of distinguishing between economic migrants and political refugees' (ibid 123). He identifies the following categories:

- People who arrived before 1992, who were recognized as refugees (about 850,000): they have papers allowing them to move around without special permission, to live together as a family, to work and to use health and education services.
- People overstaying temporary permits: after the fall of the Soviet-backed Najibullah regime in 1992, newly arriving Afghans were no longer fully recognised as refugees. All the same, the Iranian authorities agreed with UNHCR to issue 550,000 temporary permits valid up to 1995. Many stayed on after these expired.
- Overstaying visitors: some 300,000 or 400,000 Afghans have been issued with visas to visit relatives, on pilgrimage or to have medical treatment, but have overstayed.
- Illegal entrants: still others have used networks or smuggled to enter Iran illegally. They sometimes carried refugee identity cards issued by the mujahideen resistance groups, and which were sometimes accepted by the authorities.

Apart from the first group, all of these were in a precarious position vis-a-vis the authorities. Under such circumstances, the living conditions of Afghans in Iran were often poor:

On the one hand, the country [Iran] has needed Afghan manpower (especially during the Iran-Iraq war and ensuing reconstruction), but the government also want to avoid a Pakistan-style situation and takes various steps to discourage integration and longterm residence. This complicated policy...leads to a degree of arbitrariness that is ruinous to the morale of the Afghans. Repression alternates with periods of much greater tolerance. Although Afghans can easily find a job, and are accepted as workers, they generally do not feel secure enough to settle down with their families in Iran (ibid: 129).

Since the US-led intervention in Afghanistan which resulted in the fall of the Taliban late in 2001, conditions for Afghans in Iran have deteriorated further. Arguing that Afghanistan was now relatively peaceful, the authorities pressed Afghans to return, the labour market was more strictly regulated and welfare provision was curtailed (ibid 130). The ways in which policy has

attempted to address this kind of cross-over between refugee and labour migration are considered below, at pages 20-24.

*Labour migration as poorer households' asylum migration*

As was suggested above, there is arguably a hierarchy of destinations that would-be migrants can aim for, according to the capital – social and financial -- that they can muster (Van Hear 2006). This applies both to 'voluntary' migrants, such as labour migrants, and to refugees seeking safety from conflict. As the cost of migration to the west has inflated, largely as a result of increasing restrictions on immigration imposed by western countries, movement to such destinations (especially from the 1990s) has increasingly become the preserve of those that can mobilise substantial resources. For the less well-off, labour migration may be an option, but even this requires considerable outlays for low income households. Those who seek refuge in neighbouring countries may also become labour migrants who support both refugee kin and those who remain in the homeland. In a way, labour migration can become poorer households' asylum migration, if the purpose of that migration is thought of as being broadly the security of the whole household, rather than more narrowly as a source of protection for an individual. For the poorest households, migration outside the country is rarely an option, since such households cannot afford to send any members abroad.

This hierarchy of destinations has been reinforced as pathways to find asylum in western countries have been closed off: in such conditions, labour migration may increasingly emerge as a means of seeking safety as well as a means of securing livelihoods. Sri Lanka provides examples of this. Uncertainty over the future of the Sri Lankan peace process in the wake of the electoral victory of a hard-line government in November 2005 and escalating violence in the north and east drove many to seek refuge outside the country once more. Some – apparently the families or associates of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) members – sought refuge in Tamil Nadu in south India, as in the 1980s and 1990s. However, there is evidence that some were going to the Middle East to find work as a kind of refuge – particularly young Tamil men who were subject to the multiple dangers of arrest and harassment by the Sri Lanka armed forces, recruitment by the LTTE, or assassination in increasingly bitter factional fighting. With

asylum in affluent western countries largely ruled out because of restrictions on claiming asylum and high smuggler charges, and asylum in Tamil Nadu unattractive or difficult to obtain because of the attitude of the Indian authorities, seeking work in the Middle East appeared to be one of the dwindling options left. That such a trend was gathering momentum was borne out in reports by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) that there was a sharp rise in the numbers seeking employment overseas early in 2006, particularly from conflict-ridden districts in the north and east (SLBFE, reported in *The Morning Leader* 01 02 06).

The hierarchy of destinations is reflected in the charges levied on migrants and refugees to reach different countries and regions. For example, in 2008-09, someone from a conflict-affected area in Sri Lanka wishing to go to the Middle East as a labour migrant would likely need to find the equivalent of around \$500 to pay an agent to secure the necessary documents and other requirements – a substantial sum for a poor rural household. For those seeking asylum or entry into a Western country, the sums were several multiples of this figure: someone wanting to reach Canada, the UK or Germany would need to find \$40,000, \$25,000 or \$20,000 respectively. Ten years before, in the late 1990s, the equivalent figures were \$80-200 for a labour migrant and \$6,000 to get an asylum seeker to a Western country: the differential between the cost of the two forms of migration has therefore remained roughly constant (Van Hear 2002; personal communication 2009).

Different forms of migration therefore vary greatly in cost, and so access to resources – principally money and social capital (see pages 6-7 above) – shape the migration strategies that can be pursued. This has disturbing implications because it means that for those trying to escape conflict or persecution, the better endowed can buy a better quality of asylum. Others have to settle for less attractive and less secure forms of migration and destinations, notably seeking safety in their own country. This inflation in the cost of asylum is largely a result of the constellation of restrictive measures controlling movement that have been put in place by the world's richer countries over recent years. Migration has always entailed costs for the households involved, but these have been greatly driven up: not so much the cost of travel, which if anything has come down in relative terms, but rather the costs of negotiating the migration regime. Shifts in the political economy of the migration regime thus play out differentially in the

lives of potential migrants: different destinations can be reached by migrants and refugees with different endowments and different forms of capital.

*Refugees transmuting into economic migrants by entering the labour market*

Having reached relative safety in neighbouring countries of first asylum or in third countries, refugees need to find means of survival and livelihood, even if they receive some support from relief agencies. This often means entering, or trying to enter, the labour market – and so in effect becoming labour migrants.

For camp dwellers in countries of first asylum, there are usually few income-generating opportunities in camps beyond petty trade and work with agencies, but refugees may form a source of labour for economic activity outside camps if movement outside of them is tolerated (Jacobsen 2005: 25-30). Obstacles to refugees' labour market participation include the location of camps, especially if they are remote, restrictions on mobility, and the attitude of local authorities and host populations. However one advantage they may have in the labour market is that aid may effectively subsidise their livelihoods, so that they are able to work for lower wages than locals are prepared to accept – sometimes leading to tensions with locals (ibid: 31-34). Jacobsen reminds us that refugee households often have members living both inside and outside camps to take advantage of opportunities that may arise in either setting (ibid: 25). Those refugees who gravitate away from camps and to cities, or make for cities directly, find themselves in much the same position as other marginal urban dwellers. Housing, problems with papers, hostility from locals and access to credit may be significant obstacles to labour market participation, but knowledge of markets gleaned from other settings may stand them in good stead (ibid 44-48).

Secondary migration or onward movement from a country of first asylum to the Gulf or on to the West is a common pattern, and often features refugees effectively transmuting into labour migrants. It is seen for example among Somali refugees in Kenya, or Afghans in Pakistan and Iran. In such locations, many refugees are confined to camps for long periods, where they remain dependent on external assistance. Others move to urban areas, where they hope to find

better livelihood opportunities. But in many host countries, especially in Africa and Asia, the authorities insist that refugees must remain in camps, so onward internal movement is seen as irregular. Often lacking proper documentation, local contacts, skills and language knowledge, urban refugees in poor countries are exposed to exploitation and hostility. Attempts at onward labour migration across international borders are a strategy for breaking out of such protracted exile and limbo. This may take the form of ‘South-South migration’ (Bakewell et al 2009), such as from Liberia to Gabon, from Somalia to Gulf Oil States, or from West Africa to Libya, or where possible, onward movement to affluent countries of the global north.

For the relatively few refugees who successfully establish themselves in affluent western countries -- the ‘wider diaspora’ (Van Hear 2006a) – income-generating opportunities may be greater than in neighbouring countries of first asylum or transit. But there are still impediments, notably permission to work, which may be restricted, and actually finding employment: both of these obstacles may drive refugees into the informal sector (Jacobsen 2005: 58-59). At the same time there are pressures to generate income that do not apply normally to others in the labour market. One of these is the burden of debt, often incurred in the various phases of flight: money has to be paid to smugglers or agents, or repaid to moneylenders or family and friends. The other is a double obligation: to support themselves and their families in the host country, and to support the parts of their families left behind in the country of origin or in countries of refuge. In this sense refugee and asylum seekers cannot help having economic or livelihood concerns because they have to address their own livelihood needs, as well as the needs of those they have left behind in the homeland or in countries of first asylum, or in transit countries. Refugees therefore cannot help becoming economic migrants.

Conditions in affluent countries of the global north frequently shift, shaping the extent of labour market participation possible for refugees and asylum seekers. McDowell (1996) found that in Switzerland a relatively liberal asylum policy operated in the 1980s, while there was demand in the labour market, particularly in the catering and hospitality sectors where vacancies could be filled by Tamils from Sri Lanka and other refugees. Refugees were arguably effectively doubling as labour migrants during this period. With recession in the 1990s and arrival of many more asylum seekers, the atmosphere changed and a more restrictive regime emerged. While refugees

could still work, employment was much harder to come by, and refugees' labour market participation was curtailed. Refugees and asylum seekers fulfilled a similar role in the UK in the 1990s and early 2000s. However the political imperative to curtail asylum seeker arrivals in the country, coupled with the emergence of new sources of low wage labour, notably from the new European Union accession countries after 2004, that could satisfy labour needs in a buoyant economy (until the steep downturn in the second half of 2008), arguably precipitated the introduction and stricter enforcement of restrictions on working by asylum seekers. From 2002 asylum applicants in the UK were prohibited from working and from around 2005 this restriction was enforced increasingly robustly. However, here as elsewhere, participation in the labour market – legally and illegally – by refugees and asylum seekers remains essential for fulfilling their local and transnational obligations.

### **The governance of mixed migration**

Having explored in previous sections the emergence of the notion of mixed migration, its salience in the policy arena and some of its empirical manifestations, this section reviews how mixed migration and migration policies encounter one other. Examples of two types of policy approach are explored. One set is reactive and restrictive: examples are detention in Turkey and deportation from Morocco. In the other example -- the negotiation of labour migration pathways in the Afghanistan case -- an attempt has been made to accommodate mixed migration rather than to contain or suppress it.

#### *Detention and deportation at the edges of Europe<sup>5</sup>*

##### *Turkey's response to mixed migration: 'guest house' hospitality*

Located at the crossroads between Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Eurasia, Turkey is often the first destination for many people fleeing conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Congo, and elsewhere. Turkey is also a major transit and destination country for migrants seeking a better life, since it lies between zones of poverty and upheaval and the perceived land of opportunity of the European Union. The IOM estimates that international migration to Turkey amounts to

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<sup>5</sup> This section draws on briefings prepared by Rebecca Brubaker.

around 230,000 people per year: given the difficulty of monitoring migration into Turkey, however, the number could be significantly higher. Of those who come, some want to establish a better life in Turkey and others to find a way through to Europe. Mixed in with these irregular migrants are people who wish to pursue a claim for asylum.

In response to the surge of migrants in recent years, the Turkish government has made border control a high priority, and is actively seeking to limit arrivals as well as to detain and deport irregular migrants within its borders. The EU, fearing a spill-over from this influx, is pressuring Turkey to stem the transit flow from reaching European borders.

Once migrants reach Turkey, the standard Turkish policy is to detain those without proper documentation. Most of those detained are sent to holding centres known as ‘foreigners’ guesthouses’.

The Ministry of Interior (MOI) states that only irregular migrants who have been arrested while illegally crossing the border or illegally residing in Istanbul are detained in the ‘guesthouses’ and does not accept that there are asylum seekers or refugees in these centres. However, human rights bodies suggest that asylum seekers make up a significant portion of those held in the ‘guesthouses’, which they say are effectively detention centres, and that most guesthouses contain a mixed population of would-be asylum seekers and irregular migrants (Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly 2007; Frelick 2008).

The proportion of asylum seekers among the ‘guesthouse’ population is impossible to estimate as the number of detainees varies daily due to deportations, new arrests, resettlement, and releases of asylum applicants. Many individuals with possibly valid asylum claims may never know their right to apply; by contrast, when detainees do know, the information is often spread by word of mouth and those who hear of the opportunity often apply whether or not they have a valid claim.

There appears to be little difference in the treatment of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in the ‘guesthouses’: their detention conditions are equally stark, the period of detention is often



long, and detainees lack adequate access to review of their cases. The only substantial difference in situation is that those who have applied for asylum are protected against *refoulement*. In addition, after prolonged detention, asylum seekers will usually be transferred to a satellite city within Turkey to await UNHCR's decision on their status. Irregular migrants, in contrast, face indefinite detention, until their countries of origin or the MOI itself finds adequate funds to pay for their deportation (Helsinki Citizens' Assembly 2007; Frelick 2008).

### *The expulsion of sub-Saharan migrants from Morocco*

Morocco has long been Africa's gateway to Europe: each year, tens of thousands of migrants pass from Morocco towards Spain, Italy and France. A decade or so ago, Morocco was primarily a sending country and the great majority of migrants crossing the straits were Moroccans. Today, Morocco sends migrants, accommodates those in transit, and receives migrants from throughout Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Currently, more than half of those attempting to cross the straits from North Africa to Europe are sub-Saharan migrants (de Haas 2005).

According to a study on the demographics of transit migrants in North Africa, there are 10,000-15,000 sub-Saharan migrants residing in Morocco. Three-quarters of the study's sample wished to continue on to Europe, 11 percent to return home, two percent to remain in Morocco, and 14 percent were undecided. However, the proportion of migrants is increasing who fail to enter Europe and prefer to settle in Morocco on a more long-term basis rather than return to unstable and substantially poorer homelands (AMERM 2008; de Haas 2005).

Sub-Saharan migrants' motivations for leaving most often stem from lack of opportunities, fear of persecution and violence, or a combination of both (de Haas 2006): in other words, motivations are mixed. Notably however, it is not the poorest of the poor who migrate. According to AMERM's report, two-thirds of migrants were employed before migrating. For four-fifths, better prospects were the main incentive to migrate rather poverty or unemployment. In addition, one third cited security concerns as a primary reason for leaving.

Most sub-Saharan migrants traveling to Morocco pass through Niger, cross the Saharan desert and finally enter Morocco via Algeria. Over half of these migrants reach Morocco through the border town of Oujda, 15 kilometers from the border with Algeria (AMERM 2008; de Haas 2005). It has been estimated that at any given time, there up to 1000 sub-Saharan African migrants staying temporarily in and around the town, mostly living in poor conditions and in constant fear of police raids, arrests and return to the border. Moroccan police arrest those both with and without papers during raids, holding them in the central Oujda police station until they can be deported back across the border to Algeria.

In December 2006, the Moroccan government conducted widespread raids against sub-Saharan migrants and held many in Oujda awaiting expulsion. Some of those detained had residency permits, and, according to UNHCR, among the hundreds of immigrants the Moroccan officials rounded up, there was a substantial minority of refugee card holders and or asylum seekers (Le Monde 12/2006). Apart from large scale raids of this kind, there has been an on-going to and fro of migrants between Morocco and Algeria. Within a few days, as many as 500 migrants are expelled, most of whom subsequently return. Most sub-Saharan migrants deported from Oujda return: some migrants have crossed and re-crossed the border more than 30 times. UNHCR is striving to play a more active role but too often the distinction between ‘refugees’ and ‘economic migrants’ is blurred. By continuing to use the label ‘economic migrant’ for the sub-Saharans in Oujda, the Moroccan government seeks to justify its strategy of deportation (de Haas 2006).

#### *Afghanistan: from refugees to labour migrants<sup>6</sup>*

Starting in the 1980s, the exodus from Afghanistan was one of the largest in history, with over six million refugees seeking safety, mainly in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran, but with smaller numbers in many parts of the world, including Europe and North America. Repatriations on various scales have occurred as the conflict in Afghanistan has ebbed and flowed over the past two decades or more. Following the US-led military campaign which ousted the Taliban in 2001-2, large numbers returned: perhaps three million refugees and internally displaced Afghans went back after the fall of the Taliban and the Bonn Agreement at the end of

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<sup>6</sup> This section draws on and updates Castles and Van Hear 2005.

2001. However, another three million were thought to remain in neighbouring countries. The acknowledgement that many of these may never return and the recognition that conditions have changed fundamentally within both Afghanistan and Afghan refugee communities prompted UNHCR to look afresh at the issue (UNHCR 2003, 2007c).

UNHCR resolved to continue to support voluntary repatriation within existing tripartite agreements with the governments of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, and to approach Afghan displacement as a refugee and protection issue until 2005. Thereafter UNHCR believed that the situation of Afghans in neighbouring countries should be approached primarily as a migration and development problem.

The shift in approach was prompted by the substantial changes that have taken place within Afghanistan and within Afghan communities in the asylum countries over the last two decades, including in particular the nature and level of cross border inter-action and interdependence. UNHCR recognized that displacement from Afghanistan was no longer simply a humanitarian and refugee challenge, but had grown into a complex social and economic phenomenon for which new policies and interventions were required.

UNHCR suggested that there were four general categories of Afghans in asylum countries, for each of which policies would have to be tailored:

- People who wished to return to Afghanistan when conditions improved. For these, policies could include procedures for voluntary return for a limited time beyond 2005 that could be coupled with targeted reintegration programmes.
- People who needed international protection and assistance. For these, an adequate protection regime and resettlement channels were needed on an individual basis.
- People who had entered neighbouring countries to find work or for other legitimate reasons, but who retained links with Afghanistan and would return there. For these a migration framework was needed, including means to regularise temporary labour migration and other kinds of legitimate cross-border movements.
- People who had sought asylum in the past but who had developed strong links with their host communities and were economically self-reliant because of their protracted stay:

these might wish to remain. For these, mechanisms were needed to consider them for secure long-term residence; development cooperation and resources were to be directed towards particular sectors and locations affected by the Afghan presence.

Implementing such mechanisms required a coordinated division of labour among a range of agencies, including the World Bank, UNDP, ILO, and IOM as well as UNHCR and the three main governments involved. Responsibilities included:

- Building on existing reintegration, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development processes in Afghanistan that could be reinforced to accommodate future returnees in designated areas and sectors.
- Establishing an adequate asylum and protection regime, together with resettlement channels.
- Establishing screening procedures to ensure that those required to leave the host country could do so in an orderly and humane manner and in manageable numbers.
- Establishing a migration framework involving support to draft appropriate laws and set up structures for border management, customs and immigration.
- Promoting the acceptance of continued residence with appropriate legal status for long-staying Afghans (whether formally considered refugees or not), accompanied by development assistance and community based strategies.
- Developing an information and communications strategy to make sure that affected populations were kept well informed of their options.

UNHCR stressed that it remained committed to voluntary repatriation as the main strategy for the period 2003-2005, recognising Afghanistan's recovery would be gradual and its absorption capacity limited. Nevertheless, UNHCR anticipated (perhaps wrongly, as subsequent events have shown) that conditions within Afghanistan would gradually improve and that return would be continuous and substantial in 2003-2005. This period broadly coincided with the timetable of the Bonn Agreement, with the holding of elections late in 2004 and the establishment of a new government. Nevertheless, the fragility of security within Afghanistan was recognised, as was the persistence of human rights abuses in some parts of the country. While economic and social

recovery was under way, sustainable livelihoods within Afghanistan were for many still a long way off.

As anticipated, there were indeed substantial numbers of Afghans remaining in the neighbouring countries of asylum at the end of 2005. Many refugees had effectively become migrant workers, making important contributions to various sectors in Iran and Afghanistan. Return was not an option, as long as comparable work opportunities did not exist in Afghanistan. On the contrary, like other poor countries with large-scale unemployment, Afghanistan arguably needed to explore temporary labour export strategies. It also needed to find ways of regularising the situation of existing migrants, to help improve their legal status and working conditions, and to find ways of maximising the potential development contribution of remittances and skills acquired while abroad. To achieve these goals meant going beyond UNHCR's normal activities, and working with specialist agencies like the International Labour Office (ILO) and the IOM. It also meant helping the government of Afghanistan to develop migration management capacities, and promoting cooperation with the governments of Pakistan and Iran.

To prepare the groundwork for a new approach, the Afghanistan Comprehensive Solutions Unit (ACSU) was set up by UNHCR in 2003. The ACSU was to work with the governments concerned and relevant agencies to explore new interventions that could address poverty, migration and social exclusion, which had become salient features of current population movements and required approaches that were rather different from those currently offered by UNHCR.

This approach seemed to point in some radical and important directions. Its perspective went beyond conventional humanitarian approaches, and included a broad-based analysis of the social transformation of the whole society, in which war and displacement were only one dimension. Effectively, the new approach acknowledged the possibilities of transnational solutions to refugee issues.

The prevalence and persistence of violence, insecurity and food shortages in Afghanistan, particularly from 2006, largely stymied the good intentions of this new approach there.

Moreover, conditions in Iran were hardly propitious. The government of Iran offered to regularise the status of 200,000 Afghans as labour migrants in 2005, provided they returned home first and resettled their families in Afghanistan (UNHCR 2007c: 9). There appeared to be few takers for this. In 2006 there were reported to be more than 900,000 registered refugees in Iran, and hundreds of thousands of others without documents. In 2007 Iran was reported to have deported 360,000 Afghans in the country without documentation, indicating that the regularisation of Afghan migrants-cum-refugees in the Islamic Republic had a long way to go (UN News Service 07 12 08). Nevertheless, the attempts at comprehensive solutions in Afghanistan showed the potential of thinking across organisational mandates and taking account of the interests of different states and communities. Above all, the recognition that one form of migration, refugee movement in which protection needs to be assured, could transmute over time into others, such as labour migration requiring different policy approaches, was realistic and welcome, and could very usefully be emulated in other protracted refugee situations.

### **Conclusion: transnationalism as a durable solution?**

In recent years both analysts of migration and those who design and implement policy have increasingly recognized the reality of mixed migration. As this paper has shown, migration can be mixed in several senses, which to some degree relate to stages of the migratory process: motivations may be mixed at the point of making the decision to move, which involves varying combinations of choice and compulsion; people may travel with others in mixed migratory flows; motivations may change en route; and people may find themselves in mixed communities during their journeys or at their destination. Onward migration may feature similar mixtures of motivation, mixed flows and mixed communities in transit or at the destination.

This growing acknowledgement of the salience of mixed migration points to a related set of migrant behaviours and practices, which have come to be known as transnationalism, to which mixed migration contributes, and which also is increasingly being acknowledged in the migration policy arena. The relevance of transnationalism has also been recognised for some time by UNHCR, for example, which observed almost a decade and a half ago: ‘Refugee problems are by definition transnational problems, which cannot be resolved by means of uncoordinated activities in separate countries’ (UNHCR 1995: 49). However, this thinking was

not really translated into practice, for the three ‘durable solutions’ – local integration in the place of first asylum, resettlement in another location, or repatriation to the homeland – remained tied conceptually and in practice to particular and discrete locations, with little acknowledgment of the role of mixed migration in getting to them and the importance of transnational links between them.

However the recognition of the importance of mixed migration and of transnationalism has prompted some re-thinking. UNHCR acknowledged in a document early in 2007 that migration could itself be ‘an interim solution’ for those needing protection:

While migrants may become refugees, refugees may also become migrants. In a number of situations, people who have left their own country in response to human rights violations and armed conflict have been able to establish livelihoods in their country of asylum. Such people may choose to remain in that country, even if the causes of flight have been removed in their homeland, or they may move on and enter the labour market in another country, even if they have no prospect of integrating in those societies or gaining citizenship there... In such circumstances (epitomised by the situation of many Afghans who are living abroad) remaining abroad as a migrant worker for a period of time may constitute an ‘interim solution’ that is distinct from the traditional durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement (UNHCR 2007a: 6).

Elaborating on this theme, the organisation stated:

UNHCR would welcome further discussion of the concept of durable solutions, which has hitherto been associated with the notion that continued mobility on the part of refugees and former refugees represents a failure of the integration or reintegration process. In a period of globalization, and at a time when many countries of origin cannot yet offer adequate jobs and other livelihoods to their citizens, it may be appropriate to consider whether legal migration opportunities should be incorporated more fully in UNHCR’s approach to the promotion of durable solutions (UNHCR 2007b: 12).

It is this view – that derives in part from insights in migration research -- which has informed policy initiatives like that in Afghanistan, where measures to legitimate labour migration are being encouraged alongside continuing efforts to provide adequate protection for those who need

it. While the outcomes of this approach in Afghanistan and its neighbours have been mixed, this is certainly a more constructive approach than the efforts to suppress mixed migration through deterrence, detention and deportation, which tend to be the norm elsewhere, as exemplified by the cases of Turkey and Morocco outlined above.

Policy could arguably go one step further and acknowledge that transnationalism may in itself be a ‘durable solution’ for conditions of displacement – or at least an ‘enduring’ solution (Van Hear 2003, 2006b). There are a number of arguments in support of such an approach. First, ‘transnationalism’ is arguably a ‘solution’ favoured by displaced people and other migrants, since it is the practice often pursued by them in everyday life. As this paper has suggested, in areas experiencing conflict or other severe strain, households or extended families often disperse under varying degrees of compulsion to take advantage of different resources at different sites and to spread risk. Some stay at home or seek refuge in other parts of their country, thereby becoming internally displaced. Of those who flee to a neighbouring country of asylum, the more vulnerable (often the elderly, some women and children) may stay in camps where they have access to health and education services. Other members of the extended family may go to cities in search of employment or seek seasonal agricultural work; they may negotiate access to land or livestock in the host country, or find ways of maintaining control of their assets still in the homeland; or they may find trading niches between town and country or across international borders. Still other extended family members may go abroad as labour migrants, asylum seekers, illegals or through other migratory channels to find work and incomes for themselves and their families, sometimes in other continents. Such ‘strategies’, if they may be called this, may well be in place before displacement, but the portfolio of strategies is likely to be broader after displacement, sometimes of necessity, sometimes by new opportunities which open up. Access to social networks and mobility can be among refugees’ most important assets (Stepputat 2004; Van Hear and Sørensen 2003; Van Hear 2003; Van Hear 2009).

Second, as is now increasingly well recognised, the resources that now move among transnational households and communities are potent means of relief, recovery and development in conflict and other settings that generate mixed migration. Remittances and other flows and exchanges tend to be an effective means of reaching people in need, since they are often one-to-



one flows, rather than the more generalised distributions implemented through aid or welfare -- although there are obvious issues of equity here, not least between those households with migrants abroad and those without. Transnational connections may be vital in sustaining families and communities in upheaval or conflict, and have the potential for assisting such societies once conflict abates. Building on such potential would involve understanding that the return of some members of a household or community to a 'post-conflict' society may be predicated on others staying abroad. That way the viability or durability of return might be enhanced: by sending money home for example, those abroad may help to set up or sustain livelihoods or businesses established by returnees during start-up periods or during hard times. A sustainable livelihood may then be established as the basis for subsequent returns of the displaced. However, the deployment of transnational connections in such ways is predicated on some elements of the diaspora attaining reasonably secure residence in the place of exile.

From this perspective, the objective of discouraging 'secondary' or onward movements from first asylum countries to western states (one of the imperatives driving recent initiatives to control mixed migration), may be counter-productive, since this curtails what may be an important element within families' livelihood portfolios. Likewise, concerns to prevent 'backflows' after repatriation may militate against cross-border or translocal networks that have been built up while in exile. Refugees and internally displaced people may not want to go back permanently to their places of origin, but to re-establish their entitlements and to integrate these assets into their networks of cross-border and translocal livelihood activities (Stepputat 2004: 14).

Policy needs to recognise that these and other practices which fall under the rubric of mixed migration are legitimate, while upholding protection of those that need it. This means that those whose motivations to move are both safety and betterment should have their claims for protection taken seriously: the need for protection trumps the view that movement is for betterment. Once safety is assured, betterment and livelihood considerations come more prominently into play, with further migration as one possible option among several: at this point what were refugee issues have arguably moved into migration questions. A concomitant of this is that protection means securing safety somewhere, in some place: so long as safety is assured and

is commensurate with international standards, it does not matter where that ‘somewhere’ is. A further implication is that the emphasis of the current discourse is misplaced. As this paper has shown, most people fleeing conflict find refuge within their own countries (they become internally displaced people). A smaller number finds refuge in neighbouring countries – usually countries that are lower or maybe middle income. A much smaller number – usually the middle classes who have some resources and can pay smugglers – make it to more affluent countries. Yet most of the centre of gravity of the asylum debate is concerned with the latter – those who can pay for a better quality of asylum.

It is clearly not fair that someone who is better resourced in terms of money or networks should receive better quality protection than someone with just as strong a case for protection but with fewer resources and less developed networks. It cannot be right that protection is accorded differentially according to resources. More attention is needed on the protection of those displaced within their own countries and those who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, and in particular the expansion of their choices and capabilities. Those relatively better-off people who have made their way to affluent countries can play a part in that expansion of the choices and capabilities of those who find themselves in less prosperous locations. Policies need to be tailored to be conducive to these ends.

Such thinking may help policy and practice to move from somewhat reactive approach focusing on ‘protection’ to a more proactive perspective focusing on the promotion of choices and capabilities. The policies, norms and practices that constitute the migration/refugee ‘regime’ would then have as their objective enabling people to choose whether to move or stay put. The recognition and accommodation of mixed migration and its counterpart transnationalism will go some way towards finding durable solutions for people on the move in search of safety and betterment.

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