

# Share the Journey:

## No one should be forced to flee their home

### The situation

In the last decade, a growing number of people around the world have been forced to flee their homes and cannot return home. Today, 68.5 million people are living in forced displacement — an estimated one percent of the global population and the highest level in modern history. Violence, armed conflict, persecution based on religion or ethnicity, development megaprojects that destroy homes or livelihoods, extreme poverty, and environmental causes, including climate change, drive people from their homes and communities. The war in Syria has been a major factor of forced migration, but many other countries have become unsafe for some of their own citizens, including Burma (also called Myanmar), Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Burundi, Iraq, Yemen and the Ukraine<sup>1</sup>.

Refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people leave their homes because they fear for their lives, their freedom, and their security. These people need a safe haven, and Development and Peace-Caritas Canada works with organizations around the world to provide for the most urgent needs of those impacted by some of the worst forced migration crises in the world today. However, it is essential that we also address the root causes of this forced migration. Addressing these causes will require all of us to work together, from citizens to civil society organizations and humanitarian actors, to multi-lateral organizations to local governments.

### Why do people flee?

What drives people to leave their homes, families and friends? To risk their lives to reach a distant and unknown country, in often dangerous conditions? What makes some people leave while others stay?

The moment they leave is when they determine that they can no longer survive where they are, and the causes could include numerous, interrelated factors including ethnic genocide, civil war, hunger, extreme poverty, drought, and/or flooding. These underlying causes of forced migration are complex, numerous, and interrelated.<sup>2</sup> There is not necessarily a simple cause-and-effect relationship when an individual or group decides to flee their homes and communities. In fact, there is a set of root causes and triggers that interact together in complex and unpredictable ways.

It is therefore important to avoid analyzing migratory movements according to a single factor. For example, it might be easy to say that Syrian women are fleeing their country because of the armed conflict, which in itself is true. However, there are other underlying causes, such as intense drought (partly linked to climate change) that caused large population displacement, combined with the lack of democracy and citizen participation, which triggered the conflict, among other things<sup>4</sup>. Root causes usually develop slowly and may exist for years before a trigger exacerbates an already difficult situation into a crisis and people decide that they must flee<sup>5</sup>.

### Internally displaced people

The majority of forced migrants stay within their country's borders; they are called internally displaced people (IDPs). In 2017, the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 40 million people were internally displaced, which makes up 58.4 per cent of forced migrants. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), 2017 saw a record level of internal displacement caused by violence and armed conflict<sup>6</sup>. To date, Colombia remains the country with the largest population of internally displaced people (7.7 million people), followed closely by Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq and Somalia<sup>7</sup>.

Like refugees, a variety of causes push IDPs to flee their homes. In its latest annual report, the IDMC highlights the many interdependent causes of internal displacement: chronic poverty, political instability, weak governance, environmental disasters, etc.

### In 2017:

**40 million**  
IDPs

**25.4 million**  
refugees

**3.1 million**  
asylum seekers

Source: UNHCR

### Addressing the root causes of forced migration: The work of Development and Peace-Caritas Canada

From drowned families in the Mediterranean to children in cages on the Mexico-US border, the drama of this crisis begs us to respond urgently, but how?

Protecting and caring for displaced people when they escape to safer regions or countries is essential, and is a responsibility that all countries share. However, beyond humanitarian work to protect and assist refugees, the international com-

munity also needs to address the root causes of forced migration.

Development and Peace – Caritas Canada works in many of the home countries where refugees and migrants have fled, including Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Honduras, and we also work with partners in the host countries where refugees have fled to, including Bangladesh, Jordan, Lebanon and Cameroon. Through our work, we are both responding to these humanitarian emergencies, while also addressing the root causes of forced displacement by promoting peace and reconciliation, justice for women, ecological justice, and democracy and citizen participation.

Promoting human rights and democracy is not easy, but Development and Peace has been working with grassroots organizations, including faith-based organizations and social movements, to promote inclusive and participatory democracies where the rights of all women, men, and children are respected, regardless of gender, religion, race or ethnicity. Social movements are citizen-led, participatory, and work from the ground up. They hold governments to account for issues affecting citizens, and promote solutions that address these issues. When everyone in a country has access to human rights, and when there is a healthy and dynamic civil society, citizens can live in safety and security.

Development and Peace also promotes respect for the environment and the respect of human rights by Canadian businesses. Many communities in developing countries have been forcibly displaced and have had their natural resources extracted or polluted because of the actions of Canadian businesses overseas. Other communities have lost their land to desertification because of climate change. When communities are consulted and participate in determining their own path to development, the likelihood of forced migration is reduced. We want the Canadian government, as well as Canadian individuals and companies to live up to the highest standards regarding human rights, labour laws and

environmental legislation regardless of where they are based.

### **A gendered look at root causes and solutions to forced displacement**

Every year, millions of women are forced to leave their homes. UNHCR estimated that in 2017 there were 21 million forced migrant women. Some women are escaping domestic violence, armed conflict, or natural disasters. Others are fleeing persecution or extreme poverty. They leave their families and homes to take terrible risks.

Migrant women face exploitation and abuse, but they are resilient and leave their homes with the hope of improving their lives and those of their children. From the moment women flee, they are highly vulnerable to violence, rape, and exploitation, and they face multiple forms of discrimination during their journey<sup>8</sup>. At border crossings, and once they arrive in a refugee camp or in a city in a host country, women continue to face serious threats to their security, freedom, and health. Women-headed households face increased rates of food insecurity. The crisis that refugees are facing exacerbates existing gender inequalities even within their communities. Imagine trying to find

refuge, but the place that was supposed to offer you safe haven ends up causing more fear and violence?

Education on gender equality for men and women, safety precautions, legal protection and access to justice, as well as women's leadership programs can all contribute to ensuring that women do not have to flee their homes, or if they do leave, it can protect them on their journey to safety. In addition, engaging women in the planning, organization, and management of both refugee and development programs are crucial for women's empowerment and self-determination.

Women are key actors for both development and peace. The respect of women's rights, which includes their full participation in society, has been shown to promote peace and security. When women play a key role in their own development, their entire families, communities, and countries benefit.

### **Durable solutions: Resettlement, integration, and return**

#### **Resettlement**

Resettlement is considered one of the three durable solutions for refugees by the UNHCR. In the case of the 8-year-long Syrian war, the forced displacement of Syrians has incited Canada to take action

### ***Canada the peacemaker: What role can we play?***

Canada must do more to prevent forced migration and resolve conflicts. Armed conflicts today are more complex, and civilians are often the main victims.

Women play a vital role in conflict prevention and in building just, sustainable and inclusive peace. Peace processes that include all key actors, including women and men from both armed forces and civil society have been shown to promote more sustainable peace<sup>9</sup>. Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security is a good start<sup>10</sup>. However, if Canada continues to increase military spending while letting its international assistance budget stagnate, we will not promote a more peaceful world.

To reduce conflict, Canada needs to ensure Canadian companies do not export arms to regimes where human rights are abused. When authoritarian regimes have access to arms, the impact of conflict increases, and gross human rights abuses can occur.

Canada has traditionally played the role of peacekeeper in the world, and we must maintain this legacy in order to resolve existing conflicts and prevent future ones.

by welcoming more Syrian refugees in 2016 and 2017. Refugees who have been accepted into Canada for resettlement have an opportunity to recover from the trauma that caused them to flee and rebuild their lives here. Resettlement provides refugees a safe haven where they can live in peace, with access to the same human rights as citizens of their new country.

However, most countries do not offer resettlement or accept very few refugees for resettlement. In fact, of the 68.5 million people living in forced displacement, 24.5 million were refugees registered by the UNHCR in 2016 and only 102,000 of them were resettled that year.<sup>11</sup>

As well, only a small number of countries offer resettlement. In recent years, the United States has been the world's top resettlement country, with Canada, Australia and the Nordic countries also offering a significant number of places annually<sup>12</sup>. However, since Donald Trump was elected in 2016, the United States has dramatically decreased the number of refugees it is resettling<sup>13</sup>.

#### **Local integration**

A second durable solution is called local integration, when refugees are welcomed by the country that granted them asylum. These neighbouring countries are often very poor, and already have difficulty responding to the needs of their own citizens, but this option allows refugees to contribute socially and economically to their host country by granting them the right to make a living and educate their children. Over the past decade, 1.1 million refugees around the world have become citizens in their first country of asylum<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Voluntary repatriation**

The last durable solution is voluntary repatriation, where refugees return to their home country once it is considered safe for them to do so. But when a country is still at war, when a minority group is still being persecuted, or when people in the country are still starving because of drought, returning home is not an option.

“Durable solutions” are available to only a very small proportion of refugees. The vast majority of forced migrants around

the world cannot access these solutions. They continue to live in limbo, where they live in tents or substandard housing and do not have the right to work or to go to school. Displaced families face extremely challenging conditions that are unimaginable to us, sometimes for generations. Some children are born in refugee camps, grow up in camps, and become adults in camps, with survival as the only goal.

The best solution for forced migrants is to safely return to their home country or community, and rebuild their lives where they speak the language, know the culture, and where they feel at home. In 2017, nearly 5 million displaced people returned home, but the number of returnees has not kept pace with the rate of newly displaced people.

To allow people to safely return home, and to prevent people in the future from being displaced, we all share the responsibility to find sustainable solutions for the current forced migration crisis, which include resettlement, local integration, and voluntary return, but it is also essential for us to address the root causes of forced displacement.

#### **The Global Compact on Refugees**

In 2016, all 193 Member States of the United Nations signed the historic New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, in which they agreed that all of us must share in the responsibility of protecting those who are forced to flee and supporting the countries that shelter them. The next step is the adoption of two new global agreements: the Global Compact for Migration, and the Global Compact on Refugees.

The Global Compact on Refugees is intended to strengthen the international response to mass movements of refugees as well as ongoing refugee situations by easing the pressure on host countries, enhancing refugees' autonomy and self-reliance, increasing resettlement, and making countries of origin safer so that refugees can return. The Compact will include a program of action to support host countries and communities to ensure that refugees have better access to

health, education and livelihood opportunities in their host communities from the moment they arrive.

The Global Compact on Refugees is based on fundamental principles of humanity and international solidarity, and is grounded in the current international refugee protection regime, which includes many human rights instruments that have been developed since 1951, as well as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, international humanitarian law, and instruments that protect stateless persons such as the Rohingya.

Canada has played an active role in developing the Global Compact on Refugees. Through consultations with Canadian civil society and refugee rights organizations, Canada has pushed for a gendered response to the refugee crisis which empowers local civil society and refugees themselves to propose their own solutions.

Pope Francis has also shown strong support for this international agreement, and has encouraged the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees as well as the Global Compact on Migration. The Migrant and Refugee Section of the new Dicastery for Integral Human Development at the Vatican has issued an advocacy document called *Twenty Action Points for the Global Compact* which articulates the Pope's call to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate refugees.

The hope is that this non-binding Global Compact will be the catalyst to transform this urgent refugee crisis into an opportunity for a shared and equitable global response. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring its success, from United Nations Member States to development organizations, local civil society, and faith-based organizations, the private sector and to refugees themselves.

## ***Steps for Canada to take: Our recommendations***

This year, in solidarity with the 68.5 million displaced people around the world, Development and Peace is asking the Canadian government to do more to address the root causes of forced displacement: by strengthening grassroots civil society organizations working for peace, democracy and human rights in fragile states in the Global South; and by investing more in diplomatic and peaceful solutions to armed conflicts.

Grassroots organizations working for peace and human rights are citizen-driven and will help build inclusive and accountable democracies where people feel safe and can thrive. Stable, democratic countries that respect the human rights of all, and ensure the fair distribution of resources and wealth, are much less likely to experience conflict and violence, persecution of minorities, and therefore forced displacement. Without inclusive and participatory democracies that respect human rights, forced migration will only increase.

Canada can also play an important role in promoting diplomatic and peaceful rather than military solutions to armed conflicts. By insisting on inclusive peace processes and by investing in peacebuilding, Canada can help to reduce conflict and assist in bringing countries onto the path towards peace.

### ***To learn more:***

- Canadian Council for Refugees:  
<http://ccrweb.ca/en>
- UNHCR (The United Nations Refugee Agency):  
<http://www.unhcr.org/>
- Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017, UNHCR:  
[www.unhcr.org/statistics](http://www.unhcr.org/statistics)
- IOM (The International Organization for Migration):  
<https://www.iom.int/>
- United Nations Global Compacts:  
<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/>
- Migrants & Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Integral Human Development at the Vatican:  
<https://migrants-refugees.va/>

### ***Canada needs to:***

- Contribute to efforts to promote inclusive democracies;
- Prevent and resolve conflicts;
- Hold countries to account for international human rights and humanitarian law violations;
- Alleviate poverty through international development assistance;
- Promote the fair distribution of the Earth's resources.

### ***Questions you can ask your Member of Parliament***

1. With the growing number of forced migrants in the world, what is Canada doing to address the root causes of forced migration in order to prevent this situation from getting worse?
2. What will Canada do to support the implementation of the new Global Compact on Refugees?
3. What can Canada do to support more durable solutions for refugees, including resettlement, integration, and safe return?
4. Canada has a legacy as a global peacemaker. Do you think it is the best strategy to increase the national defense budget by 70% over 10 years, while letting the Canadian international assistance budget stagnate?
5. What can you do to ensure that the international assistance budget is increased, so that Canada can play its role as a global leader for development and peace?
6. Climate change is a major driver of forced migration. Currently Canada is far from reaching its targets. In your view, what concrete measures should be implemented by Canada in order to meet these goals and prevent more people from leaving their communities because of the effects of climate change?

## Notes

- 1 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, available online: [www.unhcr.org/statistics](http://www.unhcr.org/statistics)
- 2 Castles, Stephen, Hein de Haas et Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: The Guilford Press, p. 26; Kenyon Lischer, Sarah, "Conflict and Crisis Induced Displacement", in Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long and Sando Sigona, *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee & Forced Migration Studies*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 319.
- 3 Santini, Jean-Louis, "La sécheresse record, un élément à l'origine du conflit en Syrie", *La Presse*, March 2, 2015, available online: <http://www.lapresse.ca/environnement/dossiers/changements-climatiques/201503/02/01-4848844-la-secheresse-record-un-element-a-lorigine-du-conflit-en-syrie.php>
- 4 Kenyon Lischer, Sarah, *op. cit.*, at p. 319; UNESCO, *Migration as a Development Challenge: Analysis of Root Causes and Policy Implications*, MOST/REPORTS/2017/1, January 2017, available online: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002470/247089E.pdf>; Schmeidl, Susanne, "Exploring the Causes of Forced Migration: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis, 1971-1990", *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 78, n° 2 (June 1997), p. 284-308; *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, World Disaster Report 2012: Focus on Forced Migration and Displacement*, Geneva, 2012, available online: [http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/2012\\_WDR\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/2012_WDR_Full_Report.pdf)
- 5 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Annual Report 2017*, available online: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/annual-report-2017>
- 6 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement 2017*, available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf>
- 7 UNHCR, "Women", n.d., available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/women.html>
- 8 M. O'Reilly, "Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies", October 2015, *Inclusive Security*, p. 3, available online: <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Why-Women-Report-2017.pdf>
- 9 Global Affairs Canada, "Canada renews commitment to women, peace and security", [Press Release], February 7, 2017, available online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2017/02/canada-renews-commitmenttowomenpeaceandsecurity.html>
- 10 Castles, Stephen, Hein de Haas et Mark J. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
- 11 UNHCR, "Resettlement", n.d., available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html>
- 12 United States Refugee Processing Center, "Admissions & Arrivals", available online: <http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>
- 13 UNHCR, "Solutions", n.d., available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/solutions.html>

## Case Study: Burma

# Rohingya refugees: forced migration and an uncertain return

The Rohingya are a Muslim ethnic minority of Burma (also called Myanmar), a Southeast Asian country where more than 90% of its 52 million inhabitants are Buddhists. Persecuted and marginalized in their own country for decades, the Rohingya are considered stateless and have neither Burmese nationality nor freedom of movement within the country.

On August 25, 2017, violence erupted between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and the Burmese army in the north of Rakhine State. Between August and October 2017, more than 600,000 Rohingya fled atrocities being committed by the Burmese army that the United Nations has qualified as ethnic cleansing. The majority have taken refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh after a long and dangerous journey.

This massive influx of refugees resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The urgency with which people had to flee and the magnitude of displacements increased the vulnerability of thousands of children, women, and men who, still today, lack essential necessities and have limited access to basic services.

One year later, the situation in Burma remains worrisome and conditions enabling a safe and dignified return for Rohingya refugees are still far from being met. Many have expressed concern about their future and their reluctance to return home as long as issues relating to citizenship, legal rights, access to services and justice, and restitution of their land have not been addressed.

Meeting their long-term needs is now clearly a priority.



### The Rohingya: the world's largest stateless population

The Rohingya, for the most part, live in Rakhine state (also called Arakan) in northwestern Burma, where they have been born and raised for a number of generations. They are, however, stateless because of restrictive provisions and the application of the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law, which denies them citizenship. Considered as foreigners in their own land, the Rohingya are deprived of their most basic rights and are targets of a wide range of discriminatory measures, including restriction of their freedom of movement, confiscation of their land, and forced labour.

Throughout history, the Rohingya have been the victims of numerous episodes of violence, notably in 1992 and in 2016, forcing thousands of people to flee to Bangladesh. For Rohingya refugees to permanently return to Burma, there must be the re-

### Human beings first and foremost

Rajida Begum, a 30-year-old Rohingya refugee in Kutupalong Camp, holds her 14-day-old daughter, who was born in a rice field as Rajida was fleeing the Burmese army. "I hid for five days in the forest, then we tried to reach the border on foot. I was so scared."

Rajida gave birth on the fifth day under a plastic tarp in the middle of a rice field: "When I saw that she was in good health, I was so happy. I thanked God."

**6,700**

Rohingya killed in Burma.

**213,000**

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh before August 2017.

**919,000**

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh today, 60% of whom are children.

(Sources : UNHCR; MSF)

cognition of their political and civic rights in Rakhine state and a resolution to the central problem of their statelessness once and for all.

### **Kutupalong-Balukhali Camp, a camp that extends as far as the eye can see**

In the space of a few months, Kutupalong-Balukhali Camp, which houses nearly 626,000 Rohingya refugees, has become the largest and most densely populated refugee camp in the world. It far exceeds Dadaab Camp in Kenya, formerly the largest camp with 250,000 refugees.

In Kutupalong Camp, Rohingya refugees live crammed into shelters built with plastic tarps and bamboo stalks. The camp, which looks like a large city, has about the same population as Vancouver.

Kutupalong is still growing, which is pushing some refugees to leave overcrowded areas, or those at risk of becoming so, and freeing up space for new refugees to arrive. The camp is located in an area that is at the mercy of the weather, and with such a high concentration of vulnerable people, this is creating considerable humanitarian challenges, including drinking water shortages, malnutrition, squalor, insecurity, and overcrowding.

---

**626,000<sup>1</sup>**  
**refugees in Kutupalong-Balukhali Camp.**

**278,000**  
**refugees in other nearby camps.**

**15,000**  
**refugees in host communities.**

---

### **The lives of refugees**

The living conditions of Rohingya refugees are very difficult (drinking water shortages, risk of landslides, etc.), especially for the most vulnerable among them. There are thousands of unaccompanied children, single women who lost their husbands to violence in Burma or during their escape, the elderly, and families who have suffered direct and indirect traumas.

One year after their mass exodus, refugees still depend primarily on humanitarian aid since most arrived in Bangladesh with nothing. The basic necessities being provided (kitchen utensils, solar lamps, stoves and gas cylinders, mosquito nets, etc.) are essential and make their daily lives easier. The risk of the propagation of waterborne diseases such as cholera is being heightened by the lack of access to water and the absence of a sanitation system, combined with overcrowding in the camps and

unpredictable weather (monsoon). This situation is even more difficult for women and girls since they are generally responsible for most tasks involving water.

### **Bangladesh wants to relocate 100,000 Rohingya refugees on an island to decongest the camps**

The government of Bangladesh is planning to relocate around 100,000 Rohingya refugees to the island of Bhasan Char, off the country's coast, in the Bay of Bengal. The nation's minister of foreign affairs stated that since the presence of refugees, "*undermined the overall economic, social, and environmental situation,*" the government would in the near future proceed with the relocation of 100,000 Rohingya to Bhasan Char, which will be buttressed by a dyke to protect it from high tides and waves.<sup>21</sup>

However, Bhasan Char, which was formed just twenty years ago by alluvia from the Meghna River in the south of Bangladesh, is regularly flooded and could literally disappear under water in the event of a typhoon, which is a common climate phenomenon in the region. Moving Rohingya refugees to this island would further isolate them from the rest of the world and put them at the mercy of



### **Human beings first and foremost**

“When we first arrived in Kutupalong Camp, we were scared. It’s normal to be afraid when you arrive in a place you don’t know. There were wild elephants and some people were killed. There was a history of theft and we were frightened when we heard that children had been forcibly removed from their families and sold. We lived with this fear for a month after arriving here. We weren’t able to sleep. But today, our fears have been put to rest, by the grace of God.”

– Rehana Hossein, a Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh, who received a shelter and basic necessities from Development and Peace – Caritas Canada and Caritas Bangladesh.



### ***Human beings first and foremost***

“We were persecuted back home in Burma by the army and also by the rest of the population. We therefore had no choice but to flee. I was touched by the extraordinary welcome that was reserved for us upon our arrival. Bangladesh has been very welcoming. [...] When we arrived one year ago, we really felt that the whole world was supporting us, and we had the opportunity to share our story with thousands of media outlets. And even though the attention gradually diminished, we have the impression that the world has not completely abandoned us.”

– Muhammed Hussein, a Mahji community leader and Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh who received a shelter and basic necessities from Development and Peace – Caritas Canada and Caritas Bangladesh.

erratic climate conditions. Rohingya refugees are far from enthused about this proposal, which is viewed as controversial amongst experts, NGOs, and United Nations organizations<sup>2</sup>.

### ***Development and Peace – Caritas Canada’s response***

Development and Peace and its partner Caritas Bangladesh have been active since the beginning of the crisis in August 2017, providing food to nearly 25,000 of the most vulnerable refugees.

Thanks to the generosity of Canadians and funding from the Government of Canada, Development and Peace has been able to increase its activities by building temporary shelters, distributing basic necessities and hygiene and dignity kits, and building drinking water stations, latrines, and shower areas. These initiatives have reached nearly 100,000 refugees in camps located in Cox’s Bazar District, in southeastern Bangladesh.



### ***Human beings first and foremost***

“In Burma, I was happy; I went to school. What I miss most today are my friends. I liked to play and spend time with them. Sometimes I think of them and I feel sad because I miss them a lot. But some of them arrived with their families at the camp recently and I was lucky enough to see them again.”

– Shominara Hossein, 11, is a young Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh, whose family received a shelter and basic necessities from Development and Peace – Caritas Canada and Caritas Bangladesh.

**For more information on the situation in Burma and Development and Peace’s response, go to :**

➔ <https://www.devp.org/en/emergencies/bangladesh>

## **Notes**

- 1 Source: **Rapport de situation d’ISCG – June 21, 2018** (consulted on 24/08/2018)
- 2 Human Rights Watch, “Bangladesh: Les Rohingyas soumis aux risques d’inondations et de glissements de terrain”, August 5, 2018, online: [hrw.org/fr/news/2018/08/05/bangladesh-les-rohingyas-soumis-aux-risques-dinondations-et-de-glissements-de](http://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2018/08/05/bangladesh-les-rohingyas-soumis-aux-risques-dinondations-et-de-glissements-de) (consulted on 24/08/2018)
- 3 Human Rights Watch, “Bangladesh Is Not My Country: The Plight of Rohingya Refugees from Myanmar”, August 5, 2018, online: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/08/05/bangladesh-not-my-country/plight-rohingya-refugees-myanmar> (consulted on 10/09/2018)



## Case study: Nigeria

# Environmental migrants of the Niger Delta

Located in southern Nigeria, the Niger Delta is a region that has been heavily contaminated by oil spills caused by multinational oil extraction in the area over the past five decades. The lack of oversight of these companies has deprived fisherfolk and farmers of their livelihoods, in addition to forcing entire communities to abandon their land.

### Whole areas of Ogoniland deserted

The Ogoni people are one of the Indigenous tribes of the Rivers State of the Niger Delta region. The Ogoni are traditional farmers and fishers, but they are also involved in other commercial activities, such as animal breeding, fishing, and palm oil and salt production.

Around ten years ago, oil pollution forced children, women, and men of the Ogoni communities of Bue-Leh and Busuu to abandon their lands and leave their homes.

Oil spills, gas flares, explosions, and waste dumping have had a devastating impact on the health of local populations as well as on the quality of air, soil, and water resources. The livelihood of the Ogoni people has also been affected by this oil pollution. Farmers have been forced to leave their land, now contaminated, while fisherfolk have had to abandon their work because of the very polluted waters. Children have not been spared either. Many of them have become sick and have been forced to leave school.

Members of these communities have been confronted with the painful but unavoidable choice to leave since they do not have access to medical facilities or means of subsistence, and any future prospects are non-existent until there is a proper



rehabilitation of the area. Abandoning their homes and their land has been the only solution available to them.

### Deprived of everything, the community of Bue-Leh abandons its island

On April 4, 2008, the community of Bue-Leh had to go into exile because of an oil spill a few metres from their island.

The head of the community, Chief Sunday Kpabari, explained that this oil spill destroyed the only source of drinking water in his community. "We tried everything to survive and to stay [on our island] but it was not possible. Our agricultural land was damaged by pollution. There was no more drinking water and our children were getting sick and dying because of the polluted water that we were drinking. Everyone was forced to flee and now we're scattered all over."

For these reasons, the 3,000 members of this Indigenous community gradually deserted their traditional island home. Exile, however, has proven

In 2011, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) published a report revealing the devastating consequences of 50 years of intense oil exploitation in Ogoniland, Nigeria. Taking into account the pollution of the air and water tables, as well as the destruction of vegetation, the results of the study are alarming to say the least. According to the report, it will take nearly 30 years to carry out a thorough cleaning. Such operations have yet to begin.

### 55 million

An estimated 55 million litres of Shell oil have spilled into the Niger Delta (only what Shell acknowledges). (Source: Amnesty International)

### 2 million

With a production of around 2 million barrels per day, Nigeria is the largest oil producing country in Africa.

### 50

Shell is one of the biggest oil companies operating in Nigeria, where it has been present for more than 50 years.



The head of the community, Chief Sunday Kpabari and his wife Baribee-dum Kpabari, had to leave their island to take refuge, with their children and other members of their community, in Gwawa.

too difficult to bear for some community members, who return from time to time to look after their homes in the hope of returning one day. This is the case for Patience Jonathan Ubani, a farmer from Bue-Leh, who now lives in Bori with her children. “Sometimes we come back here to be close to where we were born. We would be happy to come back to live in our house again,” she said. “All we want is to return home.”

**Social Action, an organization working to build the capacity of vulnerable communities**

This is the context in which Social Action, a Development and Peace partner since 2014, works to encourage citizen participation, government accountability, institutional transparency, respect for human rights, and protection of the most vulnerable people in Nigeria.

Established in 2007 and deeply rooted in the Niger Delta community, Social Action has extensive experience in capacity building with the most vulnerable communities, whose means of subsistence are frequently threatened by climate change, poor revenue management, and weak regulation of the extractive sector.

Our partner’s objective is to create, through education, advocacy, and active participation, a bond of solidarity linking committed citizens, community groups, and civil society as a whole so as to effect social change.



“All we want is to return home,” explained Patience Jonathan Ubani, a farmer from Bue-Leh.

## Case study: Syria

# The largest refugee and migration crisis in the world

### An unending war

Since 2011, Syria has been immersed in a brutal civil war that started in the wake of demonstrations growing out of the Arab Spring, a mobilization of grassroots movements calling for citizen participation and democracy in countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Several factors converged in Syria to spark protests calling for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, whose family has been in power in Syria since 1971. The al-Assad regime has exerted an authoritarianism over the population that oppresses rights and freedoms, has permitted widespread corruption and marginalizes groups not aligned with the regime.

The situation further deteriorated between 2006 and 2010, when the country experienced drought conditions made worse by climate change that reduced the income of small-family farmers in affected areas by as much as 90%.<sup>1</sup> This drove many to abandon their land and migrate to urban centres, which placed heightened tensions around resources and employment already strained by the arrival of over one million Iraqi refugees from the 2003 war.<sup>2</sup> In addition, policies to deal with water shortages were viewed as sectarian and favoured regions that support the regime. So, when demands for democracy began to spread through the region, the discontent of Syria's population made it ripe for change.

Hopes for a peaceful and democratic revolution were dashed, however, when the government used military force to quell protests and the situation rapidly degenerated into a civil war between the Syrian government and various armed opposition groups. As chaos spread, groups holding differing political, religious and cultural views entered the fray, including the Free Syrian Army, the Islamic Front, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, Hezbollah and the Popular Protection Units, the army of the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party.

The diverging interests of the international community have added to the complexity of the situation and have gradually made Syria into a battleground for influence and power. Despite condemning the use of chemical weapons believed to have been deployed by pro-government forces, the United Nations Security Council and world leaders have been

unable to reach a consensus on how best to address this conflict and have failed to negotiate peace talks or a lasting ceasefire. In September 2015, Russia became directly involved in the war after the al-Assad government made an official request for military aid, and this support has allowed pro-government forces to regain control of some key areas, at times with a high civilian toll. Iran and Iraq have also supported the regime, whereas members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), including the United States, Great Britain and France, have conducted air strikes, mainly as part of a commitment to fight the Islamic State. Although a member of NATO, Turkey has led its own missions, sometimes at odds with other NATO members, to fight what it considers terrorist Kurdish groups. Recently, Israel also launched air strikes in response to the involvement of Iran, and Saudi Arabia and Qatar are believed to be providing support to anti-Assad groups.

The sectarian and geopolitical dimensions of the war make it difficult to envision a peaceful resolution to the conflict, where democratic principles can take root and refugees can return safely to their homeland.

### Fleeing the terror of war

The war in Syria plummeted rapidly into a conflict of brutal violence between warring factions. Families fearing for their security began to cross into neighbouring countries as early as 2011, often taking but a suitcase of clothes, confident that tensions would die down after a few weeks and they could return to their homes. As fighting reached the cities of Aleppo and Damascus in 2012, the number of Syrian refugees swelled to over 500,000<sup>3</sup>. Numbers continued to escalate as fighting worsened and in June 2013, the United Nations launched its largest ever humanitarian appeal of \$4.4 billion<sup>4</sup> USD for

**18.4 million**

Population of Syria

**6.3 million**

Number of Syrian refugees

**6.2 million**

Number of Syrians that are internally displaced

**Turkey**

Country hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees (3.5 million)

**Lebanon**

Country with the highest per capita number of Syrian refugees

Source: <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html>

aid. The world was now facing the largest refugee crisis since World War II.

After the departure of a short-lived United Nations observer mission in 2012, Syria became cut off to the world, making it difficult to obtain reliable information on the death toll, as well as possible war crimes being committed by all sides. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported that there have been at least 511,000 casualties<sup>5</sup>.

A UN commission of inquiry has evidence that all parties have committed war crimes, including murder, torture, rape and enforced disappearances, and have used tactics to cause civilian suffering, such as blocking access to food, water and health services through sieges<sup>6</sup>. The humanitarian aid community has also struggled to secure a corridor for the safe passage of aid.

These conditions of terror and dread have forced close to half the population to flee the country. Today, there are 6.3 million Syrian refugees. Turkey is hosting 3.5 million, while Lebanon received 1.5 million, and is now hosting 975,000, which accounts for one sixth of the country's population. Jordan is home to Za'atari, the largest Syrian refugee camp, where 80,000 Syrians have taken refuge out of the 670,000 that have crossed the border into the country<sup>7</sup>.

### Life as a refugee

Conditions for refugees are difficult. Only 8% of all Syrian refugees live in camps<sup>8</sup>, while the rest have crowded into the cheapest lodging available. In Lebanon, the government has not established any official camps. As such, landowners are renting out vacant plots and fields to refugees, who set up makeshift camps that may or may not have basic services. Many of these camps are in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, where temperatures can easily drop below freezing in the winter. Most refugees live below the poverty line. Some have managed to find informal work in the construction, renovation and agricultural sectors, but this has created tensions with locals who feel this is distorting the job market. Although the United Nations still considers conditions in Syria too insecure for the safe return of refugees, an agreement has been reached between the governments of Syria and Lebanon for the start of repatriations. Up to 3,000 Syrians have applied to return to Syria but must await approval from the Syrian government<sup>9</sup>.

Faced with the reality that the Syria they once knew may never again be, that the al-Assad regime will most likely stay in place, and that their home has as-



### *Beyond numbers: The human face of migration*

“We are from Homs. We lived in an area in between the regime and opposition forces. We came to Jordan in November 2011 because we were afraid for our daughters. One had a newborn. A neighbour called us and said, ‘Your house is destroyed, don’t come back.’ We came for a week and we have been here 7 years.”

– Abdel and Samar, Syrian refugees in Jordan who are receiving medical aid from Caritas Jordan and Development and Peace.

surely been damaged or destroyed, many refugees are attempting to resettle in Europe by making a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean. This has led to scores of tragedies as overcrowded boats have capsized and refugees have remained stuck at closed borders. The arrival of migrants on European shores has contributed to a rise in populist politics in Europe focused on anti-immigrant policy.

In Canada, figures from 2017 indicate that there are 40,081 Syrians that have been resettled in Canada, either through government or private sponsorship<sup>10</sup>.

### And those still in Syria...

Within Syria itself, over 6.2 million people have been displaced, sometimes up to three or four times over. A World Bank report estimates that as of early 2017, a third of housing and about half of medical and education facilities have been damaged or destroyed. The report finds that on average about 538,000 jobs were destroyed annually during the first four years of the conflict, and that young people face an unemployment rate of 78% and have few options for survival<sup>11</sup>.

The targeting of health facilities has had a significant impact on health services and the spread of communicable diseases, such as polio, which has re-emerged amongst the population. In fact, it is estimated that more Syrians are dying from lack of access to healthcare than as a direct result of fighting.

In the last year, the country has endured some of its bloodiest battles as the al-Assad regime has attempted to take control of certain areas at any cost.

Communities such as Eastern Ghouta, Idlib and Afrin have been at the mercy of both sides, and civilians have described hiding in tunnels without food or water to attempt to survive air raids, shelling and the release of toxic gases.



### ***Beyond numbers: The human face of migration***

“I came to Jordan in 2013. I have two sons and one daughter. One of my sons refused to come with us because he was in school and wanted to finish his studies. It was the last time I saw him. A plane hit the area where he was staying, and he was killed. He was only 20 years old.”

– Samir, Syrian refugee in Jordan who is receiving medical aid from Caritas Jordan and Development and Peace.

## ***How Development and Peace – Caritas Canada is responding***

Development and Peace has been responding to the needs of those affected by the war in Syria since 2012.

In Lebanon and Jordan, with support from the Canadian government and our donors, we are working with local Caritas’ to provide medical and psychosocial assistance to Syrian refugees living outside of official camps. In addition, we are collaborating with local organizations to help provide livelihood opportunities.

In Syria, we are working to provide aid to those displaced or trapped in besieged areas. Our partners are striving to provide essential services, such as education, food and healthcare to the most vulnerable.

As a means for addressing the root causes of this conflict and those in the region, we are supporting grassroots peacebuilding initiatives that aim to create ties between communities of different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Our partners are advocating for peaceful political solutions and are fighting against impunity in Syria, in the region and internationally.

***To learn more about our work on the Syrian crisis, visit:***

📍 [www.devp.org/syria](http://www.devp.org/syria).

## ***Notes***

- 1 Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter”, A/HCR/16/49/Add.2, January 27, 2011, available online: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/D2862AD64C55CAE585257839005E536A-Full\\_Report.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/D2862AD64C55CAE585257839005E536A-Full_Report.pdf)
- 2 *Idem*
- 3 Nebehay, Stephanie, “Syrian refugee number top 500,000:UNHCR”, December 11, 2012, available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-refugees/syrian-refugee-numbers-top-500000-unhcr-idUSBRE8BA09020121211>
- 4 UN News, “UN announces largest ever humanitarian appeal for conflict-torn Syria”, June 7, 2013, available online: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2013/06/441682-un-announces-largest-ever-humanitarian-appeal-conflict-torn-syria>
- 5 Syrian Observatory For Human Rights, “During 7 consecutive years...about 511 thousand people killed since the start of the Syrian revolution in 2011”, March 12, 2018, available online: <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=86573>
- 6 Human Rights Council, *Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, available online: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IIICISyria/Pages/IndependentInternationalCommission.aspx>
- 7 UNHCR, “Syrian Regional Refugee Response”, available online: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>
- 8 *Idem*
- 9 Creidi, Imad and Tom Perry, “Syrians trickle home from Lebanon, but most stay put”, Reuters, June 28, 2018, available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-lebanon-syria-refugees/several-hundred-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-begin-returning-to-syria-idUSKBN1J01AZ>
- 10 Government of Canada, “Welcome Refugees: Key figures”, available online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees/key-figures.html>
- 11 The World Bank, “The Visible Impacts of the Syrian War May Only be the Tip of the Iceberg”, July 10, 2017, available online: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/07/18/the-visible-impacts-of-the-syrian-war-may-only-be-the-tip-of-the-iceberg>

## Forced migration in 11 words

**R**efugee, asylum seeker, internally displaced person, resettled person... Are these terms confusing to you? That's normal! Forced migration is a complex phenomenon accompanied by a vocabulary that is just as complex. Development and Peace – Caritas Canada is therefore proposing a glossary which will enable you to demystify the key terms of forced migration.

However, let us not lose sight of the fact that behind all these words and definitions, there are human beings who are suffering. Regardless of the legal or administrative category in which these people find themselves, regardless of the label placed on them, let us not forget that each one has a different journey and aspirations, and that all need our empathy, assistance, and support.

**STATELESS PERSON:** A person is stateless when no state agrees to recognize him or her as a citizen. Consequently, stateless persons do not enjoy the protection of any country, placing them in a situation of extreme vulnerability. They are thus deprived of several fundamental rights, *i.e.* they cannot vote, get a legal job, open a bank account, study, access government services, or even get married.

**1951 CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES:** Adopted on July 28, 1951 by the United Nations, this convention defines what is a refugee, what are refugees' rights, and what are the obligations of signatory States with regards to refugees. To date, the 1951 Convention includes 145 State Parties (of 193 United Nations Member States), including Canada.

**INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON:** A person who is forced to flee his or her home but did not cross an international border is classified as internally displaced. Internally displaced persons are in flight within their own country. Unlike refugees, internally displaced persons are considered to be under the protection of their home state, despite the fact that

their own government is sometimes the cause of their flight.

**ASYLUM SEEKER:** When a person is forced to flee his or her country to seek refuge in another state, this individual must complete what is called an "application for asylum" to be able to have his or her refugee status recognized. Asylum seekers must demonstrate to the government of the country where they are taking refuge that their fear of persecution is founded and that they cannot return to their country of origin.

**UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (HCR):** The UNHCR is the United Nations agency mandated to help and protect people forced to flee their homes and support them in building a better future. The HCR is also tasked with enforcing the application of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

**MIGRATION:** Migration can be defined as the displacement of a person or of a group of people, either between countries or within a country. The notion of migration encompasses all types of population movements involving a change in the usual place of residence, regardless of the cause, composition, or

duration, and refers in particular to the movement of workers, refugees, and displaced or uprooted persons.<sup>1</sup>

**FORCED MIGRATION:** Forced migration refers to the necessity to flee one's home because of threats to personal security. Forced migration has a number of causes, including persecution, conflicts, disasters, development megaprojects, climate change, and extreme poverty. Refugees, internally displaced persons, and asylum seekers are all forced migrants.<sup>2</sup>

**IRREGULAR MIGRANT:** We sometimes hear wrongful talk of illegal migration or illegal migrants. These terms are problematic since they criminalize refugees, while international law recognizes the right of asylum seekers to cross an international border irregularly (without identity documents or authorization) as long as they subsequently present themselves to the proper authorities.<sup>3</sup>

**RESETTLEMENT:** Refugees cannot always return home safely or remain in the country where they were granted asylum. The HCR has therefore been mandated to identify the most vulnerable refugees so that they can be resettled in countries where they can live safely. Fewer than 1% of refugees are currently resettled every year, and only 30 countries have resettlement programs, including Canada.

**REFUGEE:** A refugee is a person who fled his or her country because of war, violence, or persecution. Refugees are protected by international law, which stipulates that only people fearing persecution based on their identity (race, religion, nationality, or belonging to a social group) or their beliefs (religion or political opinions) may be granted this status.

**MIGRANT SMUGGLING:** This term designates a situation where smugglers help migrants cross an international border clandestinely in exchange for a payment. Migrants making use of smugglers are generally in a high state of vulnerability, and their "trip" often takes place under dangerous or even inhuman conditions.

## Sources

Global Affairs Canada, *Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling*, November 29, 2016, available online: <http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/human-traf-personne.aspx?lang=eng>

Canadian Council for Refugees, *Talking About Refugees and Immigrants: A Glossary*, available online: [http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/glossary\\_en.pdf](http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/glossary_en.pdf)

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *On the GRID: Internal displacement in 2016*, available online: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/>

International Organization for Migration and UNHCR, *Not Just Numbers: Teacher's Manual*, 2009, available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/numbers-toolkit/NJN-MANUAL-EN.pdf>

International Organization for Migration, *Key Migration Terms*, available online: <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>

UNHCR, *Forced Migration and the Evolving Humanitarian Regime*, Working Paper no. 20, July 5, 2000, available online: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ff5860e2.html>

UNHCR, *Resettlement*, available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html>

UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*, available online: <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

UNESCO, *Glossary of Migration Related Terms*, available online: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/>

---

## Notes

- 1 Definition adapted from: International Organization for Migration, *Key Migration Terms*, available online: <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>
- 2 Definition adapted from UNHCR, *Forced Migration and the Evolving Humanitarian Regime*, Working Paper no. 20, July 5, 2000, on p. 4, available online: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ff5860e2.html>
- 3 Definition from Canadian Council for Refugees, *Talking About Refugees and Immigrants: A Glossary*, available online: [http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/glossary\\_en.pdf](http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/glossary_en.pdf)