



# Final Statement of the Workshop on Humanism and Mass Migration

Pontifical Academy of Sciences & Pontifical Academy Social Sciences



## The Problem

Catastrophic migrations are placing millions of human beings at grave risk. There are over 65 million forcefully displaced persons the world over: the equivalent of every man, woman and child in Lagos (16m) Sao Paulo (12m), Seoul (10m), London (9m), Lima (8.5m), New York (8.5m), and Guadalajara (1.4m) in terror clutching a few possessions and escaping into the unknown

<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>

The majority of those seeking shelter are internally displaced persons (IDPs) not formal refugees across international borders. In addition, approximately 9 in 10 international asylum seekers remain in a neighboring country – Asians stay in Asia, Africans in Africa, Americans in the Americas.

Migrations are complex and multi-determined. They are caused by socio-economic and demographic factors and by war and terror. They also involve cultural models, social practices, political processes, historical relationships, environment degradation and natural hazards. Over the last few decades, climate change is emerging as major force.

The Working group discussed with alarm the fact that internal displacement associated with conflict and violence has been growing since beginning of the millennium and the 2015 data

represent the highest ever. The Working group noted that Asia Minor — more than the rest of the world combined — leads in the number of war-and-terror displaced human beings. In 2015 just three countries, Syria,

[1] Iraq and Yemen accounted for over half of all IDPs.

[2] Likewise, over half of all refugees under UNHCR mandate originate in three states: Syria (4.9 million) (Asia Minor), Afghanistan (2.7 million) (Asia) and Somalia (Africa) (1.2 million). Long-term conflicts in Africa have generated massive forced migrations. Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan – were included within the top 10 nations globally for new, violence-induced internal displacements in 2015.

Stopping these conflicts is a humanitarian priority.

### **Unchecked Climate Change and Catastrophic Migrations**

The Workshop carefully examined the nexus between climate disruptions, war and terror and mass displacement. Climate disruptions increase morbidity and mortality, disrupt production, decrease agricultural yields, decimate livestock, and forcefully displace millions the world over. In 2015, weather-related hazards forcefully displaced 14.7 million human beings from their homes. An additional 4.5 million displacements were produced geophysical hazards. Indeed, over the past decade well over 200 million displacements have been documented, an average of almost 25 million forced displacement each year.

We are living in the Anthropocene epoch when humans have emerged as a major force impacting every part of the earth system. Because of emissions of carbon dioxide and several other climate warming pollutants since the dawn of industrialization, the earth, its atmosphere and the oceans have warmed by as much as 1 degree Celsius. This planetary fever has resulted in major climate disruptions such as heat waves, severe storms, floods and droughts. With unchecked emissions, the warming is likely to exceed 1.5 degree Celsius by 2030, 2 degree Celsius by 2050 and a destabilizing 4 degree Celsius by 2100. Rising sea level of one to two meters, in addition to extreme heat waves, tropical storms, glacier melts and prolonged droughts are likely by 2100.

We caution social scientists and policy makers that such warming magnitudes as well as the speed of the warming are unprecedented compared with the observed climate changes of the last several thousand years. Any attempts to extrapolate, causal links between climate change and migration based on past records, to the future trends may be unreliable and may severely underestimate the threats we face in the coming decades. However, the decades-long drought, agricultural failure, dramatic urbanization and failed government response in Syria is a powerful

case in point.

Given our uncertainties in the sort of non-linear climate feedbacks triggered by such unprecedented warming, there is a one in twenty chance the warming can be a catastrophic 6 degree Celsius by 2100. While most policy actions focus on central values such as 2 degree Celsius and 4 degree Celsius, we advocate an approach that prepares citizens for both the central and the low probability warming projections such as one in twenty chance of 6 degree Celsius warming by 2100.

With unchecked emissions, mass displacement and migration can become a major threat for the poorest three billion people within decades and a major threat for the entire population by 2100. The good news is that there is still time to mitigate emissions and avert such systemic risks for children, our grandchildren, and us.

We examined documented displacements due to environmental disruptions across all regions of the world. Floods, storms, cyclones, monsoons, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, landslides and extreme temperatures displaced millions of people in 2015. Workshop participants noted that India

[3], China

[4] and Nepal

[5] accounted for the largest number of people displaced.

In sum, the UNHCR predicted that climate change would become the “biggest driver of population displacements, both inside and across national borders.” Though there is general consensus that quantitative estimates are presently unreliable, we insist that an ethical global policy response to the emerging climate-migration crisis cannot await reliable metrics. International cooperation on climate mitigation is urgent. Establishing international protocols that outline the rights of climate refugees and the responsibilities of industrialized nations toward them cannot wait.

We call for a probabilistic policy approach that accounts for diverse climate science projections (including low probability / high risk projections) and combines evolving quantitative metrics with powerful case studies that document cause and effect through human experiences of climate migration. Climate justice for the global poor is as much a battle against the culture of indifference as it is about redistributing responsibilities; and real stories mobilized through arts and culture can humanize the impact of climate change better than cold numbers can.

## A New Map

In the 21st Century millions of human beings are lingering in camps far away from the wealthy cities of Europe, North America and Australia. Millions are waiting for asylum; and millions more are living in the shadow of the law as irregular or unauthorized immigrants. The U.S., the country with the largest number of immigrants in the world, has an estimated 11.3 million undocumented immigrants and 5.2 million children with at least one undocumented immigrant parent. The vast majority of these children—4.5 million, are U.S.-born citizens. But these children are living in the shadow of the law—in constant fear of deportation and sudden family separations. President Barack Obama deported more than 2.5 million immigrants over the last eight years. Moving forward President Trump is making good on his promises to step up deportations, build a 2,000-mile wall along the Mexican border, and to halt Syrian and other refugees from entering the United States.

This is a new form of forced migration, and it does not fit existing policy frameworks.

In the aftermath of World War II, Europe, the United States and allies developed a set of policies for refugees based on the assumption that whatever caused them to feel their homes would be resolved eventually. Civilized nations could promise “non-refoulement,” the right not to be returned to a place of violence or persecution, because the promise was only temporary.

But today, protracted conflicts are sending million fleeing with no expectation of return. In 2014, in 33 conflicts globally, the average length of exile was 25 years (UNHCR & Global Monitoring Report, 2016).

Indeed, the Workshop examined protracted conflicts and devastated environments holding little promise of safe return. The conflicts in the countries generating the greatest numbers of forcefully displaced, such as war and terror in Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia have endured longer than World War I and World War II. Millions are fleeing existential threats but do not meet the standard requirements for refugee status. Millions in this category come from countries that have disproportionately young populations in Africa and Latin America.

## The Young Face of Catastrophic Migrations

“Today too, children are a sign. They are a sign of hope, a sign of life, but also a “diagnostic” sign, a marker indicating the health of families, society and the entire world. Wherever children are accepted, loved, cared for and protected, the family is healthy, society is more healthy and the world is more human.” [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140525\\_terra-santa-omelia-bethlehem.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140525_terra-santa-omelia-bethlehem.html)

The education of children is also a sign, our earliest index of whether they will be able to develop

their full potential as human beings and contribute to human society, or whether they will become increasingly vulnerable to the ills of poverty and social disenfranchisement and to the evils of the “throwaway culture,” of human trafficking, brainwashing, and terrorism. Within this context, the education of refugee and immigrant children takes on an urgency that cannot be exaggerated. Children are the weeping face of the forcefully displaced. They oblige us to reexamine the causes of catastrophic migrations and our responsibilities in finding solutions. The face of catastrophic migrations in the 21st Century is youthful. We noted that worldwide one in every 200 children is a refugee. In 2015, there were 28 million children forcefully displaced. Another 20 million children were international migrants. Their combined number is now larger than the populations of Canada and Sweden put together. Millions more are internal child migrants – separated from their families.

Last year brought a record number of unaccompanied or separated children with 98,400 asylum applications mainly Afghans, Eritreans, Syrians, and Somalis – lodged in 78 countries, the largest number on ever recorded. Europe witnessed a dramatic increase in the numbers of children and youth, including unaccompanied children, arriving from the Middle East, North and Sub Saharan Africa and South Asia. Over 30% of sea arrivals in Europe since October 2015 were children; for some nationalities, including Afghans and Eritreans, children constitute the majority of asylum applicants. Likewise, in 2014 the United States experienced a significant spike unaccompanied children fleeing Central America. The number of children and youth forcefully displaced arriving in Europe and the United States are but a small proportion of global total.

By virtue of their youth alone, the youngest victims of forced displacement demand new approaches to protection and resettlement. Current protections and the architectures in place in refugee camps are generally blind to the developmental needs of children. Even when temporary protection is possible or desirable, children in flight need more than a safe haven. They need a place to grow up. They need a home. They need programs to serve them to be better aligned with the best evidence and current thinking on physical and mental health and trauma, legal protections for children, and education. Thus, over two days Workshop participants endeavored to identify needs as well as new models to address health and mental health, legal protections, education and well being of asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants in varied destinations with a focus on children and youth.

## **Priorities: Education, Mental Health and Wellbeing**

### Education

Education, for the eudemonic flourishing of the child, is the key for the future, above all for those whose youth is marked by displacement, war, forced labor, prostitution, and the sequelae of trauma, family separations and loss. In addition to war and terror, millions of children have their schooling disrupted every year because of natural disasters. [According to a recent United Nations report](#), refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than their non-refugee



counterparts. Among adolescents, many of whom have spend most of their lives in exile, only 22 percent have access to secondary education. Only half of the refugee children worldwide have access to primary education, less than a quarter are able to attend a secondary school and just 1% are enrolled in tertiary education. As a result of forced displacement 37 million children are out of school. If the host Governments and the International Community do not make the education of forcibly displaced children a priority it is impossible that the world will achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 4, the promise of quality universal primary and even secondary education which unfortunately remains an elusive.

An improvement in school access or quality of education, though both separate and fundamental goals, is often not enough to ensure that refugee children receive a proper education. Hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced children around the world cannot attend school because they must work in order to support their families, as their parents are not allowed to work in their host contexts. In the refugee camps a new focus on integrating refugees into national education systems too often falls short – children daily experiences in classrooms, as discussed in the Workshop, too often leave them isolated and excluded, without a sense of belonging or the stability that would allow them to envision their futures. Importantly, most often refugee children do not have access to a clear long-term education program.

A minority of children seeking refugee make it to the high-income countries. Europe, North America, Australia are examples. A number of countries in Europe, but not all of them, acted upon their core values, opening the borders for people seeking safety, fleeing war torn Syria. The European Union admitted more than a million refugees in 2016, an unprecedented number which included more than 200,000 children in compulsory school age. At the height of the crisis, the city of Hamburg alone had to find 400 new school places for refugee children each month. All over Europe empty buildings were made into classrooms and new teachers were hired on a daily basis. Volunteers helped people to acquire basic national language skills and assisted families to navigate their new life in a strange country. The courageous statement of Chancellor Merkel “Wir schaffen das!” turned into reality because of numerous city officials, social workers, school leaders, teachers and, last but not least, an endless army of European volunteers from all sections of society. The response on this humanitarian drama showed both European administrators and citizens on their best. This is the face of Europe we can cherish.

But there is, unfortunately, also another face of Europe and it seems to become the dominant face. It is the harsh, indifferent face towards refugees and their children, the face of European politics bargaining with the lives of desperate people. It is the face turning away from refugee families and their children stuck and forgotten in tents in the snow in Greece or Croatia. It is the face of exploitation of refugee children on the labor market in Turkey, their families held hostage in poverty by the so-called EU-Turkey deal. We are alarmed that more than 380.000 Syrian children in Turkey are not attending school. Those that do attend schools are taught in separate schools in refugee camps, taught by Syrian teachers, when available, teaching the Syrian curriculum. Turkish

second language teaching is not provided. This generation of young children, we call them ‘the locked out refugee generation,’ that cannot return to Syria any time soon, will be left empty handed. The EU-Turkey deal succeeded in only one thing: keeping the image of this humanitarian disaster out of sight from Europeans. The destiny of these young children, who should be in school, has been outsourced by the European Union to the camps in Turkey and the margins of Turkish cities. This is a disgrace for the European Union – and for the European citizens in whose name this deal is made. There is no justification for the unequal treatment of those who made it to Europe in time and who receive aid and education, and those children who are in fact denied a future beyond the waiting room. The EU-Turkey deal has made it clear that the human right for educating children cannot and should not be part of political negotiations over refugees. The right to education is squashed and squandered, while the European Union at the same time advocates that these rights are to be protected for all children under all conditions.

In the most favorable case, millions of forcefully displaced children will be migrants or refugees in a host country; where local schools endeavor in varying degrees to teach them and integrate them into the new society. Yet today less than one percent of refugees settle in distant countries in Europe, the United States or Australia. The vast majority of displaced children spend years, sometimes decades, in nearby countries, where they are generously hosted like in Lebanon or Jordan, but where education systems are over-stretched and political and economic institutions are fragile. The schooling of these children is often far from adequate. They encounter teachers with minimal training, far from adequate learning spaces, shortened instructional time, language and cultural barriers. As such they are deprived of the knowledge and opportunity for cognitive growth they deserve as fragile human beings.

For schooling refugee and migrants, Workshop participants agreed that host language development, literacy and reading, are a first priority. Yet we also concurred that schools must make sure the children do not abandon their own mother tongue, with its cultural values and essential use for family life. Second, Workshop participants emphasized the importance of education in the natural sciences, necessarily correlated with second or third-language acquisition. Science is a universal good. It harnesses children’s natural curiosity and provides a deep and rich cross-cultural context to observe, name, understand nature, and act upon it. Like playing a game does among children of different backgrounds, an active science lesson may involve highly diverse children in a common exercise of inquiry. During the last two decades, pilot projects worldwide, supported by high-repute scientists, have built such bridges in multicultural schools where large numbers of national or trans-national migrants are hosted. In these schools teachers have been trained for applying best practices and observing the blossoming of curiosity, as well as student progress in self-confidence, language development, ability to reason, dialog and create; ultimately giving hope to the child and the family. In the next decade and with adequate resources, more support from the science community and governments, this effort provides the basic resources and could easily be amplified ten- or hundred-fold, while including the new challenges of sustainable development, climate education and children’s agency.

Children in refugee camps encounter much worse conditions. Beyond food and health care, developing their skills and natural talents is the highest priority for their future to simply exist. Again, introducing them to natural science in their surrounding can be a way to break their isolation and seclusion, to open their eyes to the beauty of nature, to give them references in space and time with the simplest equipment at nearly zero-cost. By using all the resources, skills and good will which have made the success of the above-mentioned pilots in the last decades, by adding distance tools to the necessary adult-to-child physical relation, a new program for camps becomes possible, if and only if will and resources are present. Host government must be reminded that denying refugee children access to schools and knowledge is negating their humanity.

The workshop participants underscored the fact that education must not focus exclusively on knowledge but must also train the will towards the common good, friendship and charity. It must be a force against the evils of war and terror and the inhumane treatment of the other. This suggests the importance of teaching virtues and values, in particular, social justice, solidarity towards one's peers and future generations, as well as friendship and *convivencia*.

### Mental Health and Well Being

Forced displacement is inherently traumatic. Workshop participants examined data from the largest study to date on Greek refugee camps where nearly 30% of the respondents witnessed the death of a family member or friend and 20% reported experiencing torture. Lacking shelter, food and water, seeing death around them, experiencing death threats, and torture, violent border crossings, are common trauma in refugee populations. The Greek study reported half of the population surveyed reporting such traumas. Trauma generates chronic disease through direct effects and indirect effects through mental illness (PTSD & Depression) and impaired lifestyle. The connection between trauma and poor physical and psychological health demands a new emphasis on health promotion.

The research shows that refugee children and youth, even those with substantial experiences of trauma, can grow up healthy, sound and productive if given a chance. Workshop participants strongly endorsed the need, whenever possible, to work with their families and recognize the evolving capacities of children as they grow. We further suggest the need to match interventions to differences in child development and family context. It is important to promote strengths-based programs that recognize and advance the agency of young people and their families and their ambitions to advance themselves educationally, socially and economically. Children and youth can be agents in their own self-healing.

Workshop participants made a plea for trauma-informed and prevention-oriented mental health programs, as well as trauma-focused treatment where needed, including school and community based models. For young children and for the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach families, home



visiting models to promote healthy parent-child relationships and improve family functioning are recommended. It is additionally important to help build restorative environments, in collaboration with affected populations, for refugee children and families to live, study, play, and engage in developmentally-appropriate and normalizing experiences despite the very abnormal circumstances of war and displacement.

Research shows that services are most powerful when they are community-based and co-located and integrate health, mental health and education services along with home visiting and outreach to those who are socially isolated or otherwise face barriers to participation. Stepped care models can combine front-line preventative and broad-based mental health promotion models along with a higher level of mental health care, including group treatments for depression and individual treatment for traumatic stress reactions where indicated. In working holistically with families, we must recognize that parents too have often experienced trauma and loss. Two-generation approaches that include both caregivers and children are critical for helping refugee families to adjust well to the adversity they face, including promoting healthy communication, alternatives to harsh punishment and enriched parent-child interactions. Family-based models can also engage extended-family members and provide opportunities to provide support and referral to adults who may benefit from a higher level of mental health care for depression, traumatic stress reactions, alcohol or drug abuse and family violence. To overcome stigma of mental health issues and engage refugee communities, we must also attend to the language of how we communicate about promoting mental health and well-being in refugee children and endeavor to learn local language about emotional and behavioral concepts as well as concepts related to protective social resources and resilience in the face of adversity. We must also understand how protective factors operate at the individual, family, peer, school and community, and cultural level so that we build on locally inherent strengths and resources in the refugee community and culture to arrive at intervention models that are evidence-based/effective, scalable, and sustainable for assisting refugee children and families globally. In particular, we must consider how to support communities that host refugees to develop adequate mental health and social services for all individuals in both the host and refugee communities during periods of massive, and often-protracted displacement.

It is also critical to conceptualize how to “build back better” in post-conflict settings. Thus, emergency responses in conflict-affected countries must be initiated with a vision towards rebuilding, strengthening and ensuring the quality and sustainability of mental health and social services in conflict affected countries as they transition from periods of disruption, displacement and conflict to the post conflict period.

## Conclusions

The essence of humanism is recognizing *oneself as another*. This recognition should be extended to everyone and in particular to those who are suffering, such as refugees, both young and old.

The forced displacement of millions of human beings represents an existential crisis of our times, causing suffering in others that we should consider as ourselves. Millions of forcefully displaced, of refugees, of asylum seekers, of unauthorized and irregular migrants – our brothers and sisters – are placed in barbaric conditions that rob them of their human dignity and their inherent capacity to flourish. The catastrophic migrations of the 21st Century are most unforgiving to millions of children.

First, we must endeavor to stop the conflicts generating the greatest and gravest mass displacements. In 2015, just three countries — Syria, Iraq and Yemen — accounted for over half of all IDPs. Likewise, over half of all refugees under UNHCR mandate originate in three states — Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Ending these conflicts must be the top priority of international community and men and women of good will. Second, we call for widespread sustainable economic development so that people can safely and prosperously stay in their own homelands. Every child, especially girls, must have the healthcare and education they need. The literacy of girls has been proven to generate multiple virtuous cycles, *inter alia*, lower fertility, greater health and well-being and greater financial security.

Third, all the pertinent international organs must endeavor to reverse unchecked climate change – a major driver of catastrophic displacements. We must achieve climate resilience. Concurrently, Workshop participants call for the redoubling of efforts by the international community to invest in the protection, health education and well being of the forcefully displaced, above all children and youth. A shortfall over 8 billion dollars per year in education in emergencies must be corrected at once by donor countries and global philanthropy. In spite of new commitments following the Education Cannot Wait initiative approved during the World Humanitarian Summit of May 2016, only a renewed and determined focus on refugee education would bridge that gap. Following the Incheon Declaration, donor countries should finally allocate 0.7% of their GDP to Official Development Assistance and Developing Countries should follow its recommendation to dedicate at least 4-6% of GDP, or 15-20% of total public expenditure to education. Refugees and forcibly displaced children should be included in host countries educational policies in equal foot as nationals.

Furthermore, we implore host governments to facilitate the inclusion of refugee adults in the labor market, a right guaranteed by the 1951 Refugee Convention. The International Community should put pressure on those countries, mainly in the Middle East and South East Asia that have not ratified the Refugee Convention, because slave-like child labor is in many crises the single most important factor-keeping children outside classrooms.

Above all we must change our relationships with each other and endeavor to find a new form of living. In the words of Pope Francis, “every child who is born and grows up in every part of our world, is a diagnostic sign indicating the state of health of our families, our communities, our nation. Such a frank and honest diagnosis can lead us to a new kind of lifestyle where our

relationships are no longer marked by conflict, oppression and consumerism, but fraternity, forgiveness and reconciliation, solidarity and love.” Pope Francis

[https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140525\\_terra-santa-omelia-bethlehem.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140525_terra-santa-omelia-bethlehem.html)

## FOOTNOTES

[1] “Of those the Syrian conflict has uprooted, around 6.6 million people have been displaced internally. Away from the media glare and out of reach of humanitarian agencies, many struggle to survive in subhuman conditions” (*Global Report on Internal Displacement*, 2016, p. 4).

[2] In 2015 Iraq had 3.3 million and Yemen had 2.5 million internally displaced (Ibid.).

[3] “In India, the impact of two major flood and storm events were responsible for 81 per cent of the displacement, forcing three million people to flee their homes. Heavy rains and flash floods associated with a weak tropical cyclone that tracked across the Bay of Bengal in November displaced 1.8 million in the states of Tamil Nadu and southern Andhra Pradesh. Monsoon flooding associated with cyclone Komen, which struck neighboring Bangladesh in late July, displaced 1.2 million, mostly in the northern and central states of West Bengal, Odisha, Manipur, Rajasthan and Gujarat” (*Global Report on Internal Displacement*, 2016, p. 15).

[4] “Three large-scale typhoons and a flood disaster together triggered 75 per cent of the displacement in China. Three typhoons, Chan-Hom, Soudelor and Dujan, struck four eastern provinces between July and September, destroying homes, causing landslides and flooding and, between them, displacing more than 2.2 million people. Earlier in the year, heavy rains and flooding in nine southern and eastern provinces forced another 518,000 people to flee their homes in May” (Ibid.)

[5] “The earthquakes in Nepal in April and May, the thousands of aftershocks that followed and the landslides they triggered left 712,000 homes and much infrastructure damaged or destroyed. The disaster took a heavy toll on the developing nation, affecting almost a third of the population and killing 8,700 people. Many of the 2.6 million who were displaced have been unable to return to their homes, and recovery and reconstruction will take many years to complete.