

Think

new things

Make

new connections

Terms of Reference

**A hungry world on the
move:** the impact of the
food crisis on migration
and how we must respond

13-14 October 2022

DITCHILEY

The World Food Programme estimates that the numbers of people facing acute food insecurity, on the edge of famine, have risen from 135 million before the pandemic to 345 million in 2022. This growth in hunger has long term causes – climate change, conflict, COVID 19 and poor governance – but is now being accelerated by the disruption of food supplies and fertiliser caused by Russia’s war on Ukraine and blockade of the Black Sea.

The immediate policy response to this looming humanitarian crisis requires urgent organisation and action: for example, diplomatic efforts to unblock grain and fertiliser shipments from Russia and Ukraine and support for the World Food Programme and other emergency relief efforts.

The long-term impact will be more complex, but it is likely to include increased displacement of people internally within countries and increased international migration. The pressures that cause people to migrate are both intensifying and multiplying. More and more of the world’s poor and hungry are living in ungoverned spaces, where the prospect of local development and local solutions are remote. Figures released by The International Rescue Committee suggest that the world is witnessing new levels of human displacement. By 2022, 100 million people around the world will have been forced to leave their homes, a 20% increase since 2021.

Can the politics of migration be unpacked to enable new solutions that go beyond a crisis response?

How can migration in countries at risk be managed through policies and actions that enable people to stay in their homes? How can countries, cities and communities better prepare to manage the likely coming waves of forced migration? How does forced migration, through a combination of conflict, climate and famine, fit with international obligations to accept political refugees on the one hand, and work-based immigration systems on the other, that are designed to fill the skills gaps of fast evolving modern economies? How can migration be managed, so as not to damage the interests of citizens in destination countries and not to provoke emotional xenophobia? What new forms of humanitarian preparedness and development responses does the world need?

The different response from European countries to the crisis in Ukraine, compared to crises in the Middle East, for example Yemen, and Africa, for example Somalia, has provoked charges of double standards and racism from the global South. How can responses to migration be better and more consistently framed across different countries? What can we learn from the response to those fleeing Ukraine?

Bringing together country representatives, city leaders, private sector interests, technology companies, stakeholders and expertise from North and South America, Central and Eastern Europe, the Indo-Pacific, Africa and South Asia and those with lived experiences of migration, this Ditchley conference will look at migration trends and consider how to develop urgently needed new approaches.

Background

Migration in the second half of the 21st Century – what will policy and political responses look like, globally and nationally?

The conference will be informed by Ditchley discussions in early October 2022, in partnership with the charity Oxfam, on the food crisis and its impact, which will bring together Oxfam country representatives from across the world.

The history of humanity includes major stories of migration. People have always been on the move and, although the 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020 only equates to 3.6% of the global population, the drivers of all kinds of migration are multiplying. A combination of war and

climate breakdown will force people to escape threats to life and health. Disasters require immediate humanitarian responses but also pre-emptive action in response to the slower onset but unavoidable impacts such as rising seas, expanding deserts, and the water and food scarcity that will drive future displacement.

Disasters will always be a shock, but they can also be the result of vulnerabilities and systemic weaknesses that have been allowed to become entrenched. Some *climate migration* can be predicted, and analysis suggests it will intensify patterns of ‘within country’ and regional migration. The World Bank suggests there could be 216 million internal migrants due to climate factors by 2050.

Wars in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and Syria have forced millions to flee. According to UNHCR, the number of people forcibly displaced (both within countries and across borders) as a result of persecution and conflict has nearly doubled in the last 10 years. With 3.6 million Syrians, Turkey is now supporting (with funds from the EU) one of the world’s largest refugee populations.

These figures do not take account of the recent impact of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan or the current war in Ukraine. Already, the population in Warsaw has grown by 17% since the end of February and Poland has been at the forefront (alongside Estonia and other states) of the international humanitarian response to the invasion of Ukraine. Since the start of the war, estimates suggest some 12 million people have left their homes; 5 million have gone to neighbouring countries whilst 7 million are displaced within Ukraine. It is notable that before the war in Ukraine, the countries receiving the most refugees were not the G7 nations (with the exception of Germany in 2015) but, for example, Jordan, Turkey, Columbia, Uganda and Pakistan. Most refugees are hosted in low and middle income (often neighbouring) countries.

Economic migration is part of a longer, slower background trend. The number of international migrants has gradually increased over the last fifty years. The UN’s International Organization for Migration states, “*The total estimated 281 million people living in a country other than their countries of birth in 2020 was 128 million more than in 1990 and over three times the estimated number in 1970*” [[World Migration Report 2022](#)]. North America, Europe and parts of Asia are the main regions of destination with a move from lower to higher income countries characterising most flows.

How prepared are the international systems set up for humanitarian responses? What preparation is needed to manage climate change impacts? What role does migration currently play in the global economy and how will this change? Remittance flows are an increasingly important part of the role of migrant workers for developing countries. Could new approaches to migration be a part of a reset in global North-South relations with a more entrepreneurial development agenda?

What to prepare for at national and city levels and labour market needs

Migration is highly emotive. Critical distinctions in the terms used – displaced people, migrants, migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants – are often lost in the generalised fear of the consequences of migration, both for the countries people have left and for those that migrants are aiming to reach. When legitimate refugees are classed as economic migrants, internationally agreed protocols for their treatment are eroded, even avoided, by national governments. Despite the myriad terminology, there isn’t recognition of migration for survival, or avoidance of destitution, or even middle-class migration seeking economic opportunities.

While prevailing responses to migration cast it as a problem, the UK economy, as other developed economies, needs migrant workers to boost the working-age population. NHS recruitment from abroad is at record levels: half of the new nurses registered to work in the UK in the past year have come from abroad (23,000 in 2022), the majority trained outside Europe with India and the Philippines supplying the most [[BBC](#)]. In January 2022, the UK Home Office confirmed an expansion

of the UK's Shortage Occupation List to include care roles. The pandemic saw a reduction in the availability of seasonal workers for UK agriculture, and a shortage of HGV drivers knocked supply chains. A combination of Brexit and the pandemic saw people born abroad leave the UK. A need to increase the inflow of migrant workers is true for most advanced economies and acute for some, such as Japan and the US.

How can migrant labour markets be made to work on all sides – host countries, companies, consumers, citizens and migrants themselves?

The politics of migration

Migration has always been politicised. Deserving refugees are defined in contrast to those said to exploit humanitarian resources. The political salience of controlling borders and building walls stands against a spectre of huge refugee camps in Turkey, or the world's largest refugee camps in Kenya. Failures of national governments to prevent human trafficking by criminal organisations are politically fraught across the world. Fear of uncontrolled migration is both a political lever used to frighten people and a prospect with material risks for host nations. The recent announcement by the UK (and other governments) of a policy to process adult asylum seekers in Rwanda signal deterrence as much as a practical response. The political responses of all major parties in Western democracies are similar in direction (with the exception of Angela Merkel's acceptance of the Syrian refugees who came to Germany in 2015, seen as a disaster by some and as compassionate and far sighted by others). Can political and policy responses to migration be fundamentally changed?

Is there scope to create genuine partnerships with African countries as suggested by the work, for example, of Alexander Betts and Paul Collier with a development-based approach to provide refugees both sanctuary and autonomy? What lessons can be taken from the response by civil society and the peoples of Europe opening their homes to Ukrainian refugees?

Can more aspects of migration policy be devolved to city level and regional governance so that communities have a more direct say in the local impact of migration? It is on the ground in cities where migration works out in practice. Should governments be pursuing a regionalised approach to migration, rather than a one size fits all national approach?

How will the limits of compassion be drawn in the face of further humanitarian disasters – the impending global food crises, increasing economic inequalities and climate change – all in the context of a constricting cost of living crisis? The risk is that the politics of migration plays into culture wars.

Can we develop a new framework of principles for analysing and responding to migration that is more consistent across crises? How could this be grounded in the political and economic realities of the areas from which people are moving, but equally in the domestic political and economic realities of destination countries?

In the middle part of the conference, we will break into three working groups to address three sets of questions in more detail, and to consider innovation and future policies in these areas.

Group A Humanitarian responses: current approaches and future need

What can international institutions, governments, cities, the private and NGO sectors do to better prepare for future migration of different kinds? What measures can and are being taken now to absorb immediate shocks and build capacity? How can societies become more resilient to future migration longer-term? What can we learn from recent experience in Afghanistan and Ukraine? How can technology help?

Group B The economics of migration and North/South relations

How can the global North and South turn migration from a weakness in international relationships to a positive theme of cooperation that meets each other's needs? What role can cities and businesses play at sub-national level, noting that migration has been a driver of cities? How can remittances to home countries from migrants best contribute to development? What opportunities does technology offer for more remote working and off-shoring of work to reduce economic pressures for migration (noting that this will come with its own domestic policy difficulties)?

Group C The politics of migration

How can migration be re-framed in political debates to recognise the forced nature of much migration? How can we ensure better consistency of principles across crises in different regions? How can international needs be balanced with domestic politics? What scope is there for rebutting misinformation on migration that is used to drive political agendas and create fear? Is there scope for a more regional approach to handling migration, giving more direct control to communities hosting migrants?