BASEL PEACE FORUM 2019

RETHINKING PEACE
INNOVATING THE FUTURE

The Basel Peace Forum 2019 intended to inspire new and unconventional ideas for peacebuilding. About 200 decision-makers from business, diplomacy, academia and civil society from 30 countries met on 13 and 14 January in Basel to rethink peace. Linkages between peacebuilding and health and migration, architecture, digitalization, impact investing as well as risk analysis took center stage.

HEALTH AS A CONNECTOR?
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE INNOVATION FORUM "HEALTH ON THE MIGRATION ROUTE: WHAT ROLE FOR PEACEBUILDING?"

by Anna Leissing

OVERVIEW

The innovation forum explored potential entry points for peacebuilding at the nexus of health and migration. It emphasized the need for a differentiated and evidence-based understanding of the challenges and the potential related to migrants' health in the different phases of the migration cycle[1]. Therefore, researchers and practitioners from the health, the migration and the peacebuilding sector shared expertise and discussed creative and innovative ideas to prevent conflict and enhance peace-building in the context of three concrete projects related to migrants' health, as well as contributing to increase the positive impact of these projects on migrants' health through peacebuilding expertise and tools.

RECITALS

Daniel Paris, Medical Director and head, Department of Medicine at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH), provided insights into the related developments in the Swiss TPH since the Basel Peace Forum 2018, moving towards establishing a data platform and sound evidence regarding migrants' health, both in countries of origin, transit and destination. The aim is to enhance the Swiss TPHs capacities in the realm of migration medicine, which, from a health perspective, deals with similar and inter-connected issues as travel and tropical medicine. Paris presented three concrete initiatives contributing to improve diagnostics and provide adequate access to health care for migrants along the migration route. Two of the projects are located in refugee camps, facilitating data collection among refugees on relevant health indicators, as well as requirements for health care services. The information feeds into a planned global data platform, aiming to collate evidence and information on migrants' health and identifying needs and trends. As the expertise in tropical, travel and migration medicine, as well as in diagnostic procedures are synergistically interlinked, this information feeds into the establishment of a center for tropical, travel and migra-

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[1] The migration cycle includes the pre-departure situation in countries of origin, the situation in transit, integration into countries of destination and/or return to the countries of origin or transit. For more information, see the Desk Study on the Peace-Migration-Nexus.

tion medicine in Switzerland, representing the third initiative in the Swiss TPH's contribution to improving health and access to health care for migrants and refugees.

Acknowledging the developments since the innovation forum on health, migration and peace in 2018, **Pietro Mona, Ambassador for Development, Forced Displacement and Migration at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs**, emphasized the need for cross-sectoral exchange on the topic and a nuanced understanding of the global phenomenon of migration and its multiple facets. He pointed to the broad spectrum of migrants, the variety of reasons to move and the different settings along the migration cycle, all with significant implications for health and access to health care. Mona identified entry points for conflict sensitive engagement and peacebuilding regarding migrants' health in addressing issues of social cohesion, for instance by making sure that host communities benefit equally from health care for refugees. He emphasized the need to take into account cultural aspects of health and health care, as well as the potential of engaging refugees and migrants as agents, instead of passive recipients of health care. This also helps to shift to a more differentiated narrative and communication about migration, instead of focusing only on the problematic aspects connected to migrants' health. Strengthening local institutions and promoting cooperation, as well as committing to long-term engagement and a rights-based approach further contribute to harnessing the potential of initiatives in the health sector for good health for all and sustaining peace.

CORE IDEAS: STRONG EMPHASIS ON MIGRANTS' DIRECT INVOLVEMENT

Based on the inputs of the two speakers, the innovation forum stimulated participants to come up with creative and innovative ideas to (i) make use of the Swiss TPH's initiatives to promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and (ii) use peacebuilding knowledge and expertise to enhance the positive impact of these initiatives on migrant's health. The following four ideas that emerged from the discussions put **strong emphasis on migrants' direct involvement, as well as on their agency and capacity to pursue their rights**, when dealing with health issues and striving for access to health care along the migration route.

Building on the need for more differentiated views on migrants' health, the first idea suggested **conducting data collection among refugees from a salutogenic[2] perspective,** by complementing the questionnaire with factors of resilience. These questions would highlight capacities among migrant communities to keep people healthy and deal with health risks and diseases, building on existing knowledge and resources. This idea builds on the assumption that resilience and good health among migrant communities not only benefits these communities, but contributes to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in countries of origin, transit and destination.

Inspired by the discussions on digital tools for peacebuilding[3], the next two ideas stressed the potential of the Swiss TPH's initiatives to **raise awareness and build capacities regarding health issues among migrants and refugees through technological approaches.** One idea suggested using a (not yet existing) game called "healthcraft" to transmit knowledge on health and disease, and build upon this knowledge for further engagement of migrants in their communities. Another group of participants came up with the idea of a "health app", allowing migrants to register their personal health data in a cloud, and thus access the information on their personal health history and other relevant data at any stage of their migration journey. The fourth idea aimed at **using health as a connector and fostering social cohesion among migrants and host communities**. It proposed conducting data collection and providing health care services in mixed teams, including Swiss TPH staff,

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2   Salutogenesis is a model developed by Aaron Antonovsky, emphasizing the causes and factors for people's health, instead of causes and factors for disease.
3   The Basel Peace Forum 2019 took up the topic of digital tools for peacebuilding in diverse discussion fora, such as the innovation forum on "Going digital in Peace Processes" and the Pavilion "Games For Peace".

representatives of migrant communities in the camps, as well as representatives of the surrounding host communities. This would allow for enhanced interaction and understanding between the different communities, based on shared needs and interests.

REFLECTIONS & POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

In the current global political context, and with the numbers of displaced people rising, perceptions of (forced) migration as a threat to societal and state security dominate the public and political discourse. **This emphasis on state and societal security has negative effects for the safety and rights of Internally Displaced People (IDP's), refugees and migrants,** and at the same time, fails to reduce the numbers of people forced to migrate. In addition, securitized policies tend to create a narrow perspective on a highly complex phenomenon. Consequently, there is a demand for new perspectives and narratives regarding migration.[4]

The ideas emerging from the innovation forum on health, migration and peace have great potential to contribute to this shift in perceptions and narratives, since they **build on opportunities arising from health initiatives to enhance the agency and the capacities of migrants and refugees in terms of sustainable development and sustaining peace**. At the same time, and without reducing migrants to passive recipients of health care, **it is crucial to enhance capacities of states to fulfill their role as duty bearers when dealing with the highly complex phenomena of migration**, especially in fragile and conflict affected contexts, where state-society relations are often weak and marked by mistrust. Thus, the above-mentioned ideas, while focussing mostly on the direct interaction and involvement of migrant communities, could be further developed towards anchoring them in peace- and state building initiatives and policy debates, which involve a broader spectrum of actors, including state institutions.

The peacebuilding sector has the important role of promoting a conflict-sensitive approach to such initiatives. In the context of increasing pressure on democratic institutions, human rights and civic space, data collection among migrants and refugees requires **a careful consideration of privacy issues, as well as conflict-sensitive communication about the collected data, particularly in interaction with state authorities.** Furthermore, there is a range of questions regarding **cultural diversity, ownership, inclusion and participation,** which are essential factors of success when aiming at improving migrants' health and access to health care.

The further exploration of such questions among health specialists, experts on migration, refugees and migrants themselves, as well as peacebuilders, is a necessary and inspiring undertaking for following innovation fora a at the Basel Peace Forum and beyond.

4   swisspeace 2018: Desk Study: Peace-Migration Nexus,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*   Miriam Gantert, founder and CEO of Impact Hub Bern, facilitated the innovation forum.