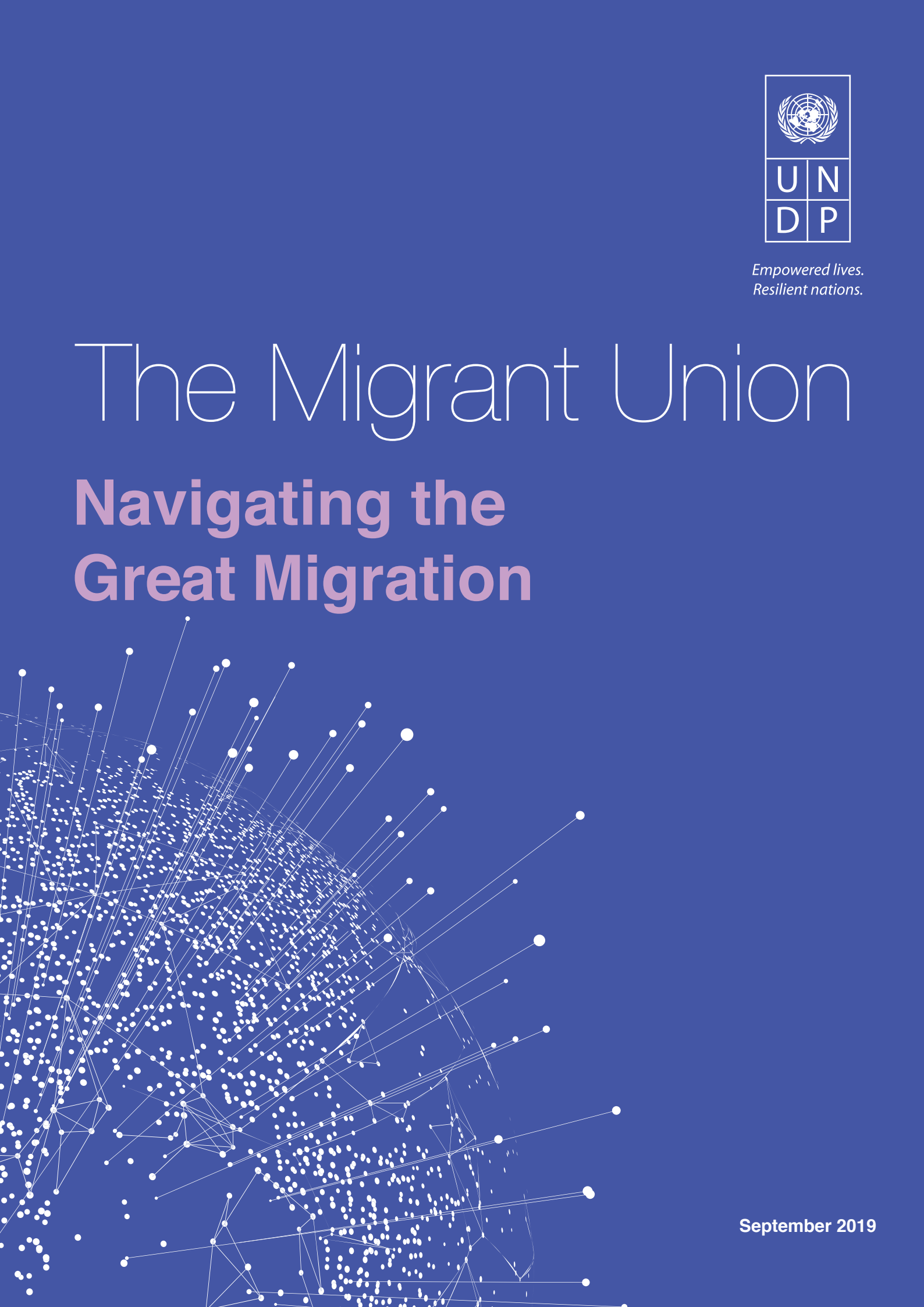

UNDP
Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.
The Migrant Union
Navigating the Great Migration
September 2019

Migrant Union

Migrant Union is an on-going initiative established to advance approaches to enabling the growing numbers of displaced people to access decent, sustainable livelihoods. Envisaged is that the Union will become an international ecosystem of displaced people accessing decent sustainable livelihoods and enabling capabilities, rights and resources.
Created in mid-2018, the initiative has to date been curated by the Project Catalyst platform of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in close association with the Open Society Foundations, which has provided financial support for the investigatory, start-up phase.

Migrant Union: Navigating the Great Disruption summarises the initiative's work to date: (a) highlighting today's practice; (b) the case for a more innovative, systemic approach to addressing the nexus between displacement and livelihoods, and (c) an ambitious set of proposals for transforming envisaged building blocks in practice.

Opinions, conclusions and recommendations presented in this paper are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the initiative's sponsoring organisations or partners.

For more information, please contact simon.zadek@undp.org.

Project Catalyst

Project Catalyst is an initiative of the UNDP established to catalyse systemic interventions in pursuit of sustainable development. Created in early 2018, it has developed a portfolio of higher-risk, high-leverage, workstreams, of which the Migrant Union is one element. Other workstreams are focused on how to harness digitalization in accelerating financing of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the development implications of reshaping global value chains, and the development opportunities associated with governance innovations at the corporate and financial system levels.

For more information, please contact simon.zadek@undp.org.

Documents are available for download at:
https://www.catalyst.undp.org/content/catalyst/en/home/what-we-do/migrant-nations-initiative/

Authors

Simon Zadek is Principal of *Project Catalyst* at the *United Nations Development Programme.* He was until recently Senior Advisor on Finance in the *Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General,* and Co-Director of the *UN Environment's Inquiry into Design Options for a Sustainable Financial System.* He has been a Visiting Professor at *Singapore Management University,* Senior Visiting Fellow at Harvard`s *JK Kennedy School of Government,* Visiting Scholar at *Tsinghua School of Economics and Management* in Beijing, and a Senior Advisor to the *World Economic Forum.* He founded and was Chief Executive of the international think tank, *AccountAbility.* Simon has a doctorate in economics and political science and publishes extensively. His book, 'The Civil Corporation', was awarded the *Academy of Management's* prestigious Best Book on Social Issues in Management. He has advised companies worldwide on sustainability issues.

Maggie Neil was the Project Manager of the 'Migrant Union' initiative. Previously, she was the recipient of a Fulbright Research grant, studying barriers to integration for newcomers arriving by sea to Sicily, Italy. She has worked at an array of NGOs in America, Europe and Asia, dedicated to migration, integration and cross-cultural understanding, and has published on migration and trafficking. A recipient of a Rotary Scholarship, she speaks fluent French and Italian, and some Spanish and Mandarin. She holds an MSc from the University of Oxford in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies and a B.A. in Humanities from Yale University.

Acknowledgments

This paper is the outcome of a year of research, prototyping, and discussion with hundreds of actors in this space, including people in government, international organizations, foundations, NGOs, networks of people who are themselves displaced, academics and researchers, and private corporations. The authors are grateful for the input and thoughts of all partners, community members, and contributing friends of the Migrant Union.

The authors wish to thank the Open Society Foundations (OSF), in particular Sean Hinton for his inspiration, thoughtful reflections and his openness to exploration and experimentation. Across OSF's Economic Justice Program, we would also thank Scott Abrams, Andrew Kramer, Julie McCarthy, Roxanne Nazir, Robin Varghese, and at the International Migration Initiative, Anna Crowley, Gregory Maniatis, Sarah Rosengaertner and Colleen Thouez.

At the United Nations Development Programme, we are appreciative of the leadership of its Administrator, Achim Steiner, in supporting this piece of Project Catalyst's portfolio, and thankful for the support of Bruno LeMarquis, Henny Ngu, Asako Okai, Owen Shumba, Arti Singh, all at Headquarters, and Claudio Tomasi at UNDP Turkey-Ankara, Milica Begovic at UNDP-Eastern and Central Europe, Sudipto Mukerjee at UNDP-Bangladesh, and Anir Chowdhury and his team at a2i Bangladesh.

Thanks to Alexander Betts, Evan Easton-Calabria, Roger Zetter and Jeff Crisp at the Oxford Refugee Studies Centre; Adam Cooper, Dakota Gruener, and Aiden Slavin at ID2020; Ziad Ayoubi, Jaime Bourbon de Parme, Nicholas Oakeshott, and Cian O'Brien at UNHCR. Special thanks also to Neville Crawley, Sam Grundy, Mia Eskelund, Andreas Hackl, Marie Godin, Indy Johar, Sasha Kapadia, Aarathi Krishnan, Stuart MacAlpine, Heloise Ruaudel, Annemieke Tsike-Sossah, Mustafa Turan and Paul van Zyl.

Finally, we thank the Open Society Foundations for its financial support of this initiative.

Copyright © United Nations Development Programme, 2019

Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the United Nations Development Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Moreover, the views expressed do not necessarily represent the decision or the stated policy of the United Nations Development Programme, nor does citing of trade names or commercial processes constitute endorsement.

Table of Contents

“The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones, which ramify, for those brought up as most of us have been, into every corner of our minds.”

John Maynard Keynes[1]

1. Executive Summary

Migration has always been a feature of the world we live in. Yet today, we are not coping well with the historically high levels of migration, including the growing number of those who have been forcibly displaced. Moreover, we are largely unprepared to deal with the expected growth in future years in forced displacement resulting from climate change, conflict and economic disruption.

Humanitarian actions providing immediate relief to those in crisis, and those to mitigate the causes of displacement, are clearly a priority. Notwithstanding such efforts, there is a need to prepare for an unprecedented era of people on the move with few if any of the hard-won rights of citizenship in Westphalian states.

Displacement needs to be understood both as an immediate humanitarian crisis and a permanent development challenge. Yet today's mainstream approaches have not, despite huge effort, forged this bridge successfully, with humanitarian tragedies spilling over into dangerous, systemic failure. Largely excluded from livelihood opportunities, displaced people are dependent on ever-more thinly spread public resources. This in turn reinforces frictions between displaced people and their host communities. As we have seen, such friction spills over into the wider political economy, undermining open societies, which in turn reinforces resistance to more productive approaches to displaced people and many other issues.

Without livelihood opportunities, displacement will transform a humanitarian challenge into a development disaster. Much is being done to increase the access displaced people have to livelihood opportunities. Yet these efforts remain ad hoc and fragmented, and wholly incommensurate with today's needs, let alone the scale of tomorrow's challenges. There are many reasons for this shortfall, from an unwillingness of the international community to acknowledge that the future will include large-scale, forced migration, through to the broader challenges for populations to provide sustainable livelihoods in a period of great turmoil.

The Migrant Union initiative envisions a world where anyone, anywhere can secure decent livelihoods. Its focus is on displaced people excluded from many of the rights of citizenship, rooted in the aims set out in the Global Compact on Refugees and its equivalent for migrants, which encourage continued experimentation and innovation. With this focus, the initiative seeks to both provide practical solutions and opportunities relevant to this disadvantaged group, and so also the growing numbers of people struggling to secure access to livelihood opportunities in a rapidly changing context.

The Migrant Union is envisaged as a global community of displaced people accessing decent sustainable livelihoods and enabling capabilities, rights and resources. Four, interlinked

building blocks together form the basis of the envisaged ecosystem.

- *First is a commonly accepted approach to credential displaced people to enable them to access livelihood opportunities, whether in terms of jobs, business start-ups, or trading.* Such credentialing would form the basis for a 'membership' pathway for displaced people, and others, to access livelihood opportunities.

- *Second, is an ecosystem of gateway platforms and organisations to livelihood opportunities* that are open to people with such credentials, including for example employers, e-commerce platforms and tax and trade regulatory authorities.

- *Third, is a collective, bottom-up advocacy function* that can negotiate as required with public and private organisations, to legalise livelihood pathways and develop an enabling environment.

- *Fourth, are the core learning and governance functions* that enable the ecosystem that is the Migrant Union to learn iteratively, build capacity and be self-governed, as well as provide a basis on which the entire enterprise could be self-financed.

The Migrant Union is being advanced through a three-prong approach. In its initial phase, the Migrant Union initiative has engaged in extensive dialogue and explored current practices.

- *Reframe the narrative* to embrace the sustainable development challenge of an emergent, permanent displacement of large numbers of people.

- *Crowd-in and catalyse practices* that could point the ways in addressing the livelihoods dimension of this challenge.

- *Advance institutional innovations* that could underpin a borderless and productive economy accessible to people on the move.

Considerable progress has been made on all three fronts so far. Outreach and dialogue are contributing to moving the narrative towards a resolute and strategic focus on the livelihood needs of a growing, population of permanently displaced people. Commissioned research has surfaced for the first time the strengths and shortfalls of an emerging practice at the nexus of the digital economy and displacement. Engagement in Bangladesh and Turkey supports analysis and prototyping that can provide specific insights as well as open up broader, international opportunities. Building on these aspects of progress, substantive work is now advancing through building a system of credentialing for livelihoods and e-markets for products and services.

The Migrant Union has proved both attractive and contentious. Positively, it has engaged those recognizing the need to embrace the systemic implications of an emerging era of many people on the move, as well as those seeking to advance governance innovations more broadly. Moreover, it reflects many of the concerns and aspirations of those active at the nexus of displacement and livelihoods, in highlighting both the weaknesses of today's practices and the possibilities of innovative approaches that leverage new institutional thinking, digitalisation and a world beyond international development aid.

The Migrant Union has touched a raw nerve for some people working for and with displaced people. Concerns have focussed on the risks of unintentionally undermining efforts to strengthen the role of governments and integrate displaced people into existing, geographic communities. Moreover, views have been expressed that the initiative

should focus on practical action to support access to digital livelihood opportunities rather than seeking to build-out new scale-focused institutional arrangements. Others, on the other hand, have expressed concerns that it is too narrowly focussed on today's displaced people and should be more ambitious in considering the bigger landscape of tomorrow's 'great migration'.

The Migrant Union offers more immediate solutions and a longer-term pathway to exploring critical governance innovations. Rather than add to a growing list of such initiatives, the Migrant Union is looking to build the connective tissue that would enable existing practice to scale. Beyond its practical ambition of providing displaced people with improved access to livelihoods, it points to much broader possibilities. Might the Migrant Union evolve into a new model of representation? If it connects people through new markets across disparate locations, could this be the seeds of a new form of distributed economy? And if what holds it together is a credentials-based membership that comes with rights and responsibilities, are these the edges of a form of citizenship? Such questions are speculative, certainly, but come at a time of profound disquiet over the apparent shortfalls in the governance of our affairs. It would be an historic twist, but by no means one without precedent, if the actions of and for such disadvantaged people delivered innovations that shaped aspects of our transnational, political economy in a new era of globalisation.

2. Bad Economics, Worse Political Economy

2.1 Numbers Count

The world is currently witnessing **'the highest levels of displacement on record',** according to the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[2] Some 70.8 million people, including Internally Displaced People, Refugees, and Asylum-Seekers, are already forcibly displaced. UNHCR estimates that a further 37,000 people are forced to flee their homes each day because of violent conflict and persecution. These numbers exceed those of people fleeing in Europe during World War II. Already in 2014 when displacement had reached a 'mere' 50 million people, then-High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, declared *"We are witnessing a quantum leap in forced displacement in the world,"* calling it a *"mega-crisis".*[3]

Remarkably, the UNHCR's record figures do not even include many of the individuals who may have had to leave their homes as a result of climate change or poverty.[4] According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), up to 1 billion people could be displaced by 2050 due to the effects of climate change.[5] In the same report, the IOM also notes that there are 'no reliable estimates of climate change-induced migration', highlighting not only the potential magnitude but also the uncertainty of the world's ability to respond to such a shift.[6]

To make matters worse, **today entire communities of people are displaced for decades or even generations.** Where the average length of displacement in the 1990s was approximately a decade, the UNHCR calculates that it is now 25 years.[7] It is even longer for certain populations including Palestinians, or Somali refugees living in Kakuma camp in Kenya, who have been displaced for 30-40 years. In Bangladesh, over 1.2 million Rohingya have been displaced since 2015 in one of the largest refugee scenarios of this century. Despite protestations to the contrary, it is highly unlikely that it will be safe for the Rohingya to return to Myanmar anytime soon.

What these numbers indicate is that **the world may soon be facing a population of people that is effectively permanently displaced and growing larger every day.** These numbers indicate that we are living in a time of unprecedented human movement. They indicate that the very categories upon which the existing migration/refugee-response system relies – namely defining 'refugees', 'displaced' and 'forced' versus 'voluntary' or 'economic' migrants – may be becoming ever more confused and perhaps inaccurate. As poverty and climate change increasingly drive people out of their homes in the new millennium, 20th century understandings of what it does and does not mean to be a 'forced migrant' are challenged and likely to become increasingly irrelevant.

What this means is that **the 20th century's 'promise of return' is looking increasingly unrealistic**. Yet many states and international institutions continue to behave as though the refugee populations they are hosting will soon be gone. Or, they use harsh border enforcement policies to try and curb people from enter-

ing, though these individuals may have nowhere safe or promising to go. As a result, soon we may have a substantial portion of the world's population that is effectively permanently on the move or displaced – or indeed emplaced, stuck in the liminal realities of camps and detention centres – but no substantial, fit-for-purpose, and scale-able approaches to enable them to successfully re-build lives of agency and independence from aid.

Is the world ready for this 'Great Migration'? Or, as one South Sudanese refugee, now living and working in Amsterdam as an activist and social worker put it – can we cope with the "Human Issue" of our time?

2.2 Restrictive Laws and Bad Economics

Many host states frame refugees and displaced people living on their territory as temporary 'guests' or indeed as 'invaders'. Such states are unlikely to implement policies, rules, and laws that enable these people to cultivate self-reliance and an ability to build dignified lives. Of course, responses vary by state, but too often displaced people are relegated to camps or placed in designated zones of a country, and/or they are not given the rights or the tools to socialize with host communities, access livelihood opportunities, or earn an education. This reality can be seen in major host countries as institutionally, politically, and geographically disparate as Italy, Lebanon, or Bangladesh.

For instance, according to the UNHCR, roughly 50% of refugee-hosting countries bar newcomers from access to formal employment, economic inclusion such as banking, or even skills training.[8] Despite the fact that the universal right to work is enshrined in the *1951 Geneva Convention* (for refugees in particular), the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and *the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (for all humans, de facto refugees, displaced people and many (forced) migrants are typically excluded from earning livelihoods.

States and host communities explicitly and implicitly bar displaced people from working for a range of reasons. There is the fear that enhancing livelihood opportunities would encourage foreigners to remain and integrate in the country, while barring them from working might coerce them back or onward. There are xenophobic and nationalist sentiments, on the rise globally. Sometimes, it's an effort to protect economically vulnerable host communities, who may already be facing uncertain employment futures as a result of poor economies or the changing nature of work. Motivations for barring individuals from access to livelihoods has been explored in significant depth elsewhere. The conclusion is that exclusion from livelihood opportunities remains a persistent and insidious reality for millions of displaced people.[9]

Excluding displaced people from accessing work and livelihood opportunities increases dependency on humanitarian aid, which becomes the means of survival outside of informal and illegal activities. A reliance on aid and welfare in turn is likely to increase host country perception of refugees as dependents and burdensome to locals. A 'vicious cycle' of bad economics and bad attitudes ensues.

Any innovative and sustainable approach to displacement will need to seriously consider such attitudes and practice that are the norm in many states. There is no question that such restrictions need to be overcome, not least as numbers increase with limited public resources. A principled and systematic approach is needed, with the need to communicate more effectively deleterious political, social, and economic effects of exclusion for host communities and displaced people alike, as well as an appreciation of the local context.

2.3 Dependence on Humanitarian Solutions

Dependence on humanitarian aid as the solution to crises of displacement is untenable in the long run. This is one observation reflected in the 2018 *Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).* The GCR roots its *raison d'être* in the concern that the 'increase in scope, scale and complexity' of refugee situations, as well as the incredible growth in average length of stays in host countries cannot be matched by today's humanitarian response.

Humanitarian aid is needed in disaster contexts as a first response. Humanitarian approaches are not, however, appropriate for delivering long-term sustainable development. In particular, as displacement becomes increasingly protracted, displaced people need opportunities to rebuild their lives and flourish, not just survive. As Dale Buscher of the Women's Refugee Commission writes,

This model is [...] unsustainable. Yes, lives are saved, but little is fixed. [...] Humanitarians keep people alive, but we don't restore dignity, we don't give them hope, we seldom open doors to long-term opportunities. [...] Given the length of displacement and its increasingly urban nature, we need to instead focus on employment and entrepreneurship opportunities from the start.[10]

In this way, humanitarianism: (a) is not fit-for-the purpose of building lives, which is becoming increasingly important as duration of displacement grows, and (b) can be unintentionally entangled in cycles of dependence that only increase the perception of displaced people as burdens to the world. **There is a clear need for a more concerted development approach that aims to reduce the dependence of individuals on international aid and domestic public finance,** without relying on overcoming the negative attitudes of states towards opening domestic labour markets to displaced people.

2.4 Prohibitive Costs: Lost Value

Effective responses to scaled, long term displacement are restricted if not prevented by today's approaches that are short term and often prevent economic and social inclusion to displaced people. These problems are amplified by the fact that current responses to displacement require prohibitive and unsustainable costs to maintain. Meanwhile global economies, and displaced individuals themselves, lose out on the economic potential that these individuals could contribute through formal avenues of work, trade, entrepreneurship and business.

2.4.1. Prohibitive and Unsustainable Costs

Increasingly prohibitive aid and welfare costs are largely shouldered by public finance in a funding model that is proving ever-more unsustainable. Each year, as more people flee disasters and violence, more money is needed to support humanitarian and other government policies that help displaced people survive. And while each year governments increase their donations to these programs, each year these donations make up a smaller percentage of the needed money.

Spending on welfare and aid for refugees is expensive – estimated at around US$25 billion per year overall, and yet this money almost exclusively covers only basic survival needs.[11] No mechanisms are built into the current system to try to enable the recipients of aid to become less dependent (on sometimes reluctant donors) and more financially self-sufficient. Further evidence that today's approach is creating an unmanageable financing problem can be seen from the growing needs of the UNHCR, the largest humanitarian agency mandated to respond to forced displacement. Governments, who comprise 86% of the UNHCR's funders, are donating more money than ever to humanitarian and migration responses.[12] In a period of austerity across many donor countries, its budget grew from US$7.5 billion in 2016 to US$8.2 billion in 2018. Yet its funding gap grew over the same period, from US$3 billion in 2016 to US$3.7 billion in 2018.[13]

These numbers indicate that the financing system for welfare and humanitarian aid towards displaced people is already inadequate and likely to become more so over time. Moreover, whilst more funding would be welcome, the solution ultimately lies elsewhere. This is evident in examples of 'donor fatigue', where initial enthusiasm for donations to a fresh crisis give way after years or months (see, for example, the UNHCR's pamphlet on underfunded projects. Even a cursory glance will surface patterns of donor fatigue around displacement contexts that are years old or no longer covered in the media).[14]

If the system is already facing shortages in funding as it faces incremental growth in displacement numbers, how will it manage an exponential growth in numbers?

2.4.2. Losing Out on Potential Value-Add to the Economy

The exclusion of displaced people and refugees from formal livelihood activities is also a lost economic opportunity for host states and the humanitarian system alike. According to the Refugee Investment Network's comprehensive 2019 report, refugees and displaced people are consistently shown to be promising employees, reliable credit-worthy loan repayors as well as entrepreneurial and worthy of investment.[15] The Kiva World Refugee Fund has distributed over US$9 million in loans to over 8,000 displaced entrepreneurs across six countries. The repayment rates averaged 96-98%, on pace with the global average.[16] A joint 2018 report by TENT and the Fiscal Policy Institute found that refugees were more likely to remain with the same employer for longer than other hires and that establishing a positive relationship with one refugee employee often led to improved recruitment through the hiring of other refugees within their linguistic or cultural group. And an Oxford Martin School report estimated that since 1990, immigrants have added €155 billion and £175 billion respectively to German and UK GDPs.[17]

Finding ways of enabling livelihood opportunities for displaced people thus can reduce dependence on humanitarian aid and the burden of host community welfare, but importantly can also add to a host country's economic well-being. We do not mean to suggest that gaining a meaningful ability to engage in decent work and earn livelihoods will solve *all* of the problems facing displaced people on the move or in a host country. However, it could help resolve some of the negative effects of current bad economic policies.

2.5 Summarizing a Need to Rethink Current Approaches

There is a clear need for rethinking current approaches to displacement challenges. Pumping billions of public dollars into an aid model that increases dependency and does not deliver to everyone who needs it is not working. If it is already showing cracks of weakness, what will the reality be in decades to come when we face an exponential leap in numbers of people displaced?

After immediate emergency needs have been met, displaced people should be given the opportunity to realize their incredible livelihood potentials. New approaches should consider the issues in the current system and try to develop strategies in response. For instance, could this economic growth be leveraged, resulting in a re-insertion of some of the generated money back into the system? Could this provide the basis for not just a self-sustaining finance model, but actually a profitable enterprise that creates an economy among displaced people? These are some of the questions at the heart of the Migrant Union's approach, and its emphasis on the importance of opening up livelihood opportunities, as explored in the following section.

3. Livelihood Futures

3.1 Right and Realities

The opportunity to access decent livelihoods has been recognized as one of the most crucial and impactful first steps for displaced people trying to rebuild their lives. In the famed words of one of the framers of the *1951 Convention, "without the right to work, all other rights were meaningless".*[18]

The importance of access to livelihoods and decent work for all is similarly recognized by the UN: it is Sustainable Development Goal #8; and is also mentioned as a goal of both the *Global Compact on Refugees* (GCR) and *The Global Compact for Migration* (GCM).[19]

Such principles take on extra importance in the context of the complex challenges of today's and tomorrow's worlds that we have laid out above. If livelihood opportunities are opened at scale for most or all displaced people, then dependence on aid will drastically be reduced. This would even permit aid agencies to re-focus their resources to where it is most needed: the initial phases of emergency responses. Of course, livelihoods are but one piece of the broader puzzle of rights and opportunities that displaced people, like individuals everywhere, need to thrive. Education, health, community, access to infrastructure and networks are some of the other key elements of a healthy ecosystem that will allow human flourishing. Yet without livelihoods, little else can work.

The right to access livelihoods exists in many refugee-hosting states.[20] The importance of livelihoods has been widely acknowledged. Research, policy advocacy, international rights instruments, and emerging practice around the globe are engaged in similar work. The 2016 New York Declaration for Migrants and Refugees, for example, followed by the 2018 GCR incentivized many host governments – notably of developing countries, where 86% of displaced people live – to expand formal livelihood opportunities for migrants and refugees.[21]

The extent to which these rights are enforced is in practice, spotty, unpredictable, and constantly changing. Some considerations include[22]:

- The right to work or legal restrictions on work do not always match the realities of gaining access to livelihoods.
- Often, legislation struggles to keep up with the emergence of new forms of work, so it may not be clear whether displaced people are allowed to engage in these new jobs.
- The right to work will of course depend on one's legal status, which might privilege those with official documents to live in a country.

In short, many states continue to bar non-citizens from working, whilst in others the right to work is not a guar-

antee of access to jobs in practice. One report by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) illustrates this for the 4 major host countries of Cameroon, Malaysia, Turkey and Jordan. Whilst on paper each of these countries allows refugees to access livelihood opportunities, what that means in reality for refugees and displaced people seeking to earn livelihoods varies widely depending on contexts.[23]

Positively, for example, Syrian refugees in Turkey are granted a special 'Temporary Protection' status that allows them to access livelihoods, and the Turkish government has even indicated that certain skilled refugees could be eligible for citizenship. However, in reality, due to the country's mobility restrictions and other administrative or social barriers, the ILO estimates that only about 1 million of the 3.5 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey are actually engaged in livelihood activities.[24] Furthermore, much of this work is conducted in low-skilled sectors that may be far below the actual capabilities and credentials of the laborers. Decent work, meanwhile, is far from assured.

There is no comprehensive data regarding numbers of displaced people engaged formally or informally in the labour market or livelihood activities. However, national data that exists in some cases, such as that of Turkey, indicate that although many countries technically allow displaced people to work, in reality the numbers of displaced people in formal livelihood structures is far lower than overall numbers of displaced people living in a country. Organic growth in access is to be applauded, however it won't be enough and may even go backwards depending on political or economic incentives, especially where they come from powerful and rich international players (such as the Jordan Compact or the EU-Turkey deal). Thus, while many host states on paper do allow livelihood opportunities, they range widely in terms of the extent to which refugees or displaced people can realistically expect to earn a decent living, build a business, or conduct international trade.[25]

3.2 Work Futures

The 'Future of Work' is impacting displacement in unique and complex ways. For one, as unskilled or semi-skilled labour is now easily automated or outsourced with the advent of AI and micro-or crowd-work, the value of human capital is changing. With the rise of gig economies, micro- and crowd-work, online digital labour platforms and e-commerce, the 21st century is experiencing profound changes in the nature of work that affect people and societies around the globe.[27]

Numerous studies by the ILO's Global Commission, the OECD, the World Bank, the G20 and others warn of **many challenges and opportunities associated with the changing nature of work.**[28] Paramount is the need to ensure decent work, labour conditions and livelihood opportunities.[29] The ILO and the OECD highlight the 'double disadvantage' facing already vulnerable workers: These individuals are already more likely to be in a precarious economic situation. Limited financial safety net, lower job security, and unequal access to training for re-skilling could bar entry to this new world of work, leaving them further behind.[30]

Despite a veritable out-pouring of research, **little has been done exploring the nexus of displacement and the future of work.** Clearly displaced people fit the 'double disadvantaged' category of vulnerable people. That said, research commissioned by the Migrant Union also pointed to potential benefits to displaced people of the changing nature of work. New tools (often digital) and ways of organizing work can open financial, skilling, and work opportunities that were otherwise inaccessible to displaced people. And, in certain cases, it could be argued that people benefit more from these changes by virtue of their displacement or need to move.

3.3 Emerging Practice

Our research points to the many initiatives already bringing displaced individuals into this new economy, in some cases even leapfrogging

traditionally marginalized or excluded individuals into mainstream formal economic structures. However, the research also shows that many of these initiatives are disconnected, fragmented, and unable to operate at scale. How can we ensure that these potential solutions are able to match the magnitude of the displacement to come? To enable livelihoods for not thousands, but millions of people.

Livelihood opportunities opened to displaced people through the new, digital economy, mirror global trends but with distinct characteristics. Global trends include online labour platforms and e-commerce platforms that are growing at 30% a year[31], and on-line education and training opportunities. Notably for displaced people, these changing market patterns can provide access to livelihood opportunities remotely, across borders, and despite local restrictions, with examples including:

- *Capability-training:* Mercy Corps' Gaza Sky Geeks and the United World College-affiliated Sky School are two of many initiatives utilizing new, often digital tools to enable displaced people to gain the skills and capabilities they need to unlock livelihood potential. Not only do these initiatives help bring individuals into the work force, they do so with sustainability and the long-term in mind. For instance, Gaza Sky Geeks follows Accenture's 'reskilling imperative', by teaching coding. And, like Sky School, Gaza Sky Geeks also teaches the kind of 'unique human skills' including 'empathy, communication and problem solving' that Accenture's Future of Work report notes will also be increasingly crucial to thriving in an economy where robots can increasingly perform the technical work.[32]

- *Access & Network:* Initiatives from the World Food Programme's Empact, to the International Trade Centre/ Norwegian Refugee Council's Refugee Employment Skills Initiative (RESI), to Mercy Corps' Gaza Sky Geeks are also recognizing that a major barrier to livelihoods for displaced people is the lack of access to employers, loan providers, or generally a market. This goes hand in hand with the fact that in displacement, people may not have local networks that help them land jobs. These initiatives connect displaced people with online labour platforms, or act as intermediaries themselves, linking displaced people to potential market actors.

- *ID & Verification:* Simultaneously, some of these very same initiatives recognize that in order for displaced people to take advantage of being linked to the market, and to having gained crucial skills and capabilities, they will need to be able to prove their identities, skills, and credentials. For example, RESI has partnered with Upwork to 'support the verification of identification of refugee freelancers through locally emitted documents.'[33]

- *Financial and Market Exclusion of Marginalized and Vulnerable Communities:* Finally, a central and multifaceted barrier to accessing livelihood opportunities is that many economic and financial tools and platforms (from e-commerce that relies on digital infrastructure, to loan access that enables a person to open a business or establish a credit score) simply are not available to many displaced people. Today, initiatives are using new tools and insights to change this too. For instance, Kiva's World Refugee Fund is now providing loans to displaced people around the world, proving that they are loan and credit worthy.

3.4 Scaling Constraints

Cutting-edge initiatives at the nexus of the digital economy and livelihoods for displaced people are promising, but as a practice remain fragmented and small scale. This is often due to more complex reasons than simply a lack of funding, including:

- **No systematic pipeline for selling produced goods:** Some initiatives rely on opportunistic use of available technologies in order to function. For example, in countries as far apart as Turkey, Thailand, and Uganda, displaced people use existing e-commerce and social media platforms such as Etsy or Insta-

gram to sell handicrafts they were taught to make thanks to skilling and training initiatives by the IRC, UNDP, or RESI.

- **Time-and-resource intensive capability development:** Enabling individuals to participate in the new global economy is not just a matter of teaching hard skills. Both Gaza Sky Geeks and Sky School place much of their attention instead on more elusive and difficult skills, like building agency, self-confidence, empathy, and other emotional and social skills necessary to work across borders and cultures. But building these skills is incredibly labour and resource intensive, including by 'mentors' who need to work one-to-one or with very few groups in order to ensure these skills are taught well.

- **Legal or policy restrictions:** The need to work within the boundaries of legal and policy restrictions on things like the right to work for displaced people can slow or stop initiatives. This is notwithstanding the fact that many of them use legal grey zones or loopholes to enable their work and then 'nudge' governments towards opening up restrictions.

- **Access, validation, and ID challenges:** Even if individuals have the skills and capabilities needed for a potential job, a lack of identification or a way to validate and verify their credentials is a major barrier to the hiring of more displaced people, especially by mainstream employers. While there is a plethora of digital ID-providers, many of these are not interoperable and do not thus allow a multiplicity of actors to verify and vet an individual's identity and credentials.

Better understanding barriers to scale naturally lead to the development of proposals for some of the activities and functions that the Migrant Union could take on.

4. Migrant Union

4.1 Time for a Change

As observed by the Global Compact on Refugees, there is the clear need to come together and think of approaches to displacement that can complement and/or scale important, existing work. Calls to focus on livelihood opportunities indeed already exist and initiatives are being executed. Already, there are attempts to bring together rights-based approaches, advocacy, and practical implementation, understanding that if people can earn a living, that will be the beginnings of their abilities to rebuild their lives.

As previously explored, there are clear barriers to achieving livelihoods access at scale. Some people lack the networks, skills, credentials, abilities, or proof of identification required in order to be hired or start a business. Employers or loan-providers might be reluctant to give a chance to someone they might not trust to repay back a loan, or who comes from a culture that is vastly different from their own.

The changing nature of work is amplifying some of these challenges but also creating new opportunities. It is increasingly important to be able to verify yourself and your work history and credentials online, be able to work across cultural and linguistic boundaries, and work digitally. Displaced people may lack IDs, work experience, or access to infrastructure and networks that are necessary in order to participate in this new economy. And employers, buyers, or investors may be distrustful of people they view as precarious or vulnerable. They also may simply not know how to efficiently find these talented individuals.

Emerging practice is showing the world that there are ways of overcoming these barriers, and that in fact the new world of work actually offers incredible opportunities for livelihood opportunities for displaced people that could benefit markets, national economies, and individual lives. However, these initiatives are often fragmented and operating in isolation or tailored to specific contexts. In the face of impending radical changes in the nature and scale of displacement, and more broadly in the world as we know it, there is the need to think through these barriers to scale and then figure out ways to surpass them.

The Migrant Union initiative, explored now in detail below, seeks precisely to identify the opportunities in emerging practice as well as barriers to its scale in order to create an informed approach that tackles current challenges. In the company of a community of actors ready and excited to take on this challenge, the initiative seeks to leverage the opportunities and enhance and support them, while catalysing system effects that help surmount barriers to scale and effectively enact system change.

Migrant Union – Design Principles

Alongside tackling barriers to scale, the Migrant Union has identified other key design principles that form a kind of 'value system' to guide its work.

1. Decent Work:
As the Future of Work research attests, simply accessing work and livelihood opportunities does not ensure 'decent work', in terms of protections from workplace abuse, or pension and health care plans. Either through advocacy or direct provision, the Migrant Union needs to ensure that decent work standards are met.

2. Participation:
The Migrant Union does not want to engage in the "messy business of nation-building", as one community-member put it, on "behalf of the members of that nation". It is vital that individuals or networks of people who are displaced and who are engaged and interested in relevant work must be part of the process of designing and building the Migrant Union.

3. Sustainability:
This initiative was borne because long-term thinking was clearly missing, at just the same time as the world is beginning to see drastic changes that will impact human life in potentially dramatic ways. Climate change is set to affect migrating and host communities alike, in ways that are as yet unforeseen. Automation similarly is impacting the nature of work, as well as the value placed on certain kinds of labour and thus on human capital. It may not be a coincidence that automation and outsourcing have coincided with the end of many guest-work programs in so-called 'destination' regions such as North America and Europe. Displacement is on the rise, and its nature is changing. Given the instability and change that the world is facing, it is key that this initiative maintain sustainability and long-term vision as central design pillars.

4. Privacy, Security & User-Centricity:
Because credentialing, identification and data gathering are clearly needed to unlock the potential of remote and digital work at scale, questions of privacy and user-centricity are paramount. Any information gathering must be done in a way that benefits and promotes the user, and no information can be collected against a user's wishes or contrary to her benefit. While there may be the need to create a more official set of standards for ID and credentialing practices, a good starting point would be ID2020's 'Standards for Good ID', which offer tests to ensure that ID's are safe, user-centric, and inter-operable.

4.2 Design Aims and Vision

Envisioned is to build a community of people, made of displaced individuals around the world as well as interested public and private-sector organizations that would together form a transborder, digitally connected 'Union'. While this Migrant Union would begin as loosely organized aggregation of different livelihood opportunities, there is also the potential for the Migrant Union to experiment in new methods of governance and citizenry. For instance, individuals who are displaced might first 'join' the Migrant Union because they want to look for jobs, open a business, or engage in some other kind of livelihood opportunities. Once they are part of this transborder ecosystem, it is likely that some common issues will emerge: hypothetically, the need for digital credentialing to be considered for a job at a participating corporation; the need for enforced labor rights for decent work; or the need and desire to organize in order to ensure more access to these livelihood opportunities. Slowly, a kind of rights-based organization could emerge, accompanying the economic impetus for joining this Union. In the long run, institutions – such as a central bank, or an education and health ministry, or even a voting system – might be created by this group of otherwise geographically and culturally disparate individuals.

This work builds on the many, on-going efforts to both offer practical support to displaced people, and to recast the narrative about displacement in ways that help us develop new approaches. Centrally, it builds on the approach set out in the Global Compact on Refugees in seeking to bring together a diverse and international group of actors who together might have a combined power to effect system change. Indeed, drawing on 'fundamental principles' of 'humanity and international solidarity' and recognizing the limits of the refugee response system as it currently exists, the GCR is primarily a global call to action. The GCR puts front and centre the need for greater international co-operation across sectors beyond humanitarianism, in the face of an existing system doing important work yet dwarfed by the scale and changing nature of the challenge.[34]

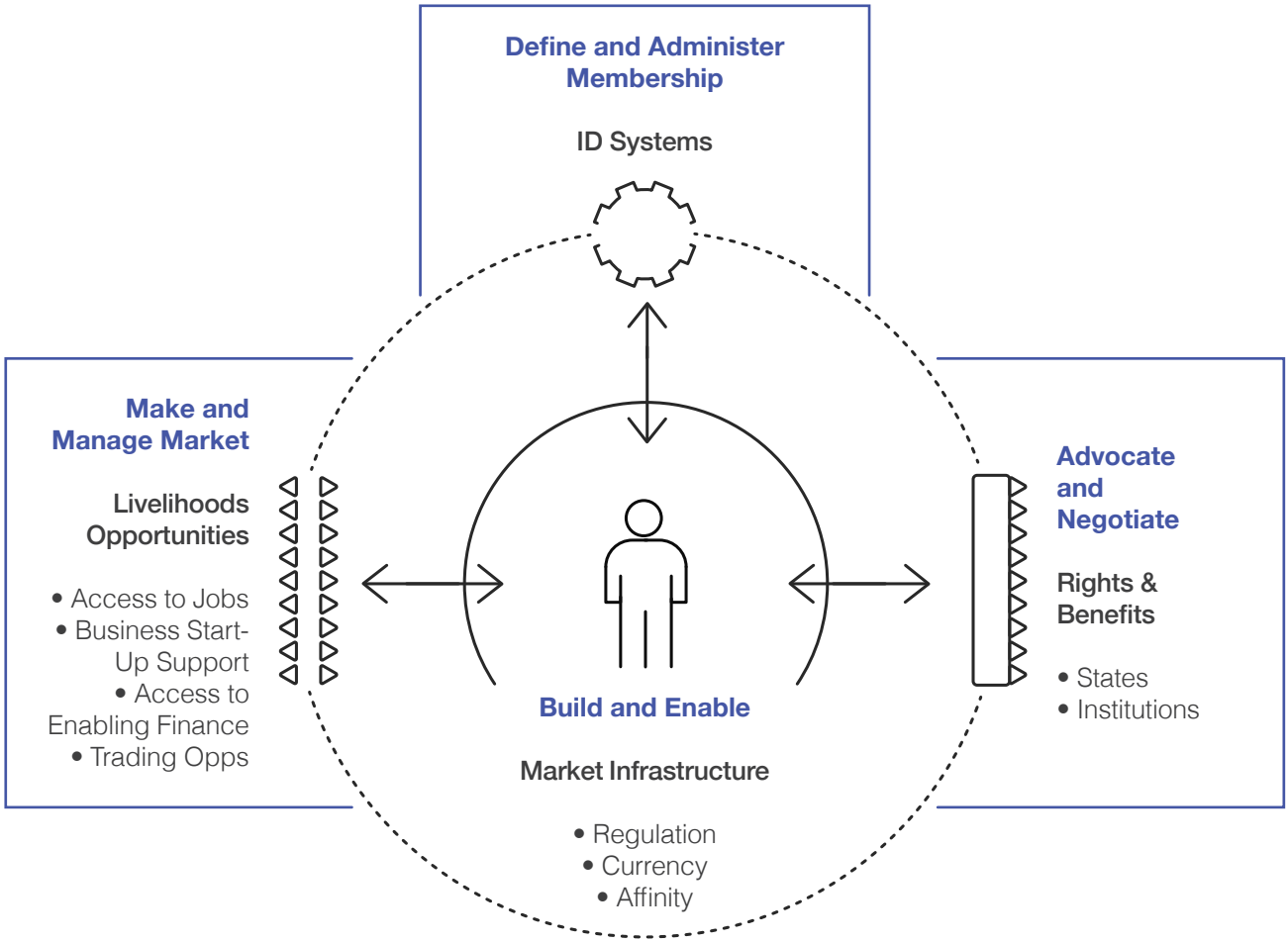
As envisioned, the mission of the Migrant Union is **to enable existing, sustainable, and long-term livelihood opportunities for displaced people and people on the move to scale, thereby creating a global market that would privilege the work of displaced people and people on the move.** It would do so by leveraging, enhancing, and scaling existing practice at the nexus of displacement, livelihoods, and the future of work.

The Migrant Union would be composed of a global, transborder group of displaced people and forced migrants, along with interested relevant private and public entities. Its aims are to enhance livelihood opportunities for displaced people and forced migrants by leveraging opportunities presented by the Future of Work. This includes, where useful, digital and technological tools that might make remote or transborder work possible and enable individuals to surmount local barriers to livelihoods and decent work.

The initiative would have several key functions, deduced through dialogue and research and based on known barriers to accessing and leveraging livelihood opportunities, as well as scaling existing work. These functions, mapped out in the illustration below, include credentialing, shaping markets, representation and system-building.

Each of these functions is now explored in further depth below.

Migrant Union System of Functions



4.3 Credentialing

As one Syrian refugee explained during the Migrant Union's London Convening, 'one of the biggest problems to accessing markets is the recognition of qualifications and experience.' The incredible importance and value of Digital ID to remedy this issue and support livelihoods access (as well as financial inclusion, access to health, education, and other public services) is widely recognized and there is already extensive on-going work in the field of digital identity at multiple levels.

Leaders in the field such as ID2020 or the World Bank's ID4D are working towards ensuring that individuals have a right to a safe, private, and user-centric means of identifying themselves and thus accessing crucial rights, services, and opportunities. UNHCR's Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) is a biometrics-based identity system that was created and is used specifically for displaced people. Other initiatives are focusing in on livelihoods by developing credible pathways for individuals to identify themselves and enable market actors to verify their credentials. Learning Machine, for instance, uses blockchain to store digital credentials that users can share and verify with anyone in the world. As we have already seen, RESI and Upwork have partnered to ensure that jobseekers RESI works with are able to upload their necessary information – a function that relies largely on trust built up between the initiative and the company.

However, these initiatives remain fragmented and often disconnected from one another. **There is no existing**

approach for advancing what is needed to build an ecosystem that allows individuals who are displaced to provide the information needed to access livelihood opportunities that arise across many different platforms.

Proposed is for the Migrant Union to create and/or manage an ID system that **provides information systematically about the capabilities of the displaced people and forced migrants in question, in order to give them access to livelihoods and associated enabling services, from starting a business, to being able to register on an e-commerce platform, or use a recruitment agency or access financing opportunities.** This is akin to a basic financial inclusion model: to access a traditional bank account, a user needs a mutable Digital ID.

Effectively, anyone who adopts a Migrant Union-approved ID/credentialing system would become a 'member' of the Migrant Union. Basic initial membership could be an ID that would be recognized by traditional banking infrastructure. This could be created through (1) aggregation and linking of existing initiatives, as well as (2) through the creation of a set of standards and rules that guide existing ID and credentialing initiatives.

4.4 Shaping Markets

Once individuals are given the opportunity to prove their identities and credentials they become 'members' of the Migrant Union. The first benefit that membership would provide is access to a market that could open up livelihood opportunities.

To build this market, it will be necessary to identify a few demand-side market actors willing to act as 'anchor tenants' or pioneers. These market actors would need to accept and trust the credentials of the Migrant Union's members, but also adhere to the design principles set out by the Migrant Union. In exchange, they would gain access to a trusted, vetted, and capable pool of supply-side talent and/or goods.

Market-making and managing activities include:

- *Building coalitions among demand-side actors:* The Migrant Union could leverage its current network and community to involve demand-side market-actors who might act as pioneering employers, buyers, and investors in refugee and displaced person-led work. This is could serve to provide proof to other market actors and inspire catalytic change.
    - Like the 'One World Alliance' in the commercial airline world, these initial market-actors would enter into a semi-non-competitive alliance that encourages participation and cooperation while bringing in a variety of actors that could begin to form the beginnings of a more complex demand-side market.
    - This approach builds on existing initiatives, such as the Tent Alliance or the IRC's BRAN, private-public sector alliances that promote livelihood opportunities for displaced people (among other refugee-centric activities). It also builds on countless formal and informal partnerships among private and public sector actors.
- *Opening possibilities for enterprise and trade:* Various activities, including supporting or linking existing initiatives doing different aspects of market-building work to each other fall into this category. For instance: skilling and training, investing, providing/recognizing digital ID or credentialing efforts, as well as buyers or investors, and market intermediaries. This strain of work would involve specifically linking and connecting different actors in order to stimulate first, engineered elements of a market, and ultimately, the creation of a complex ecosystem.
- Supporting and facilitating the scaling of intermediaries: Intermediaries provide the crucial work of linking people engaging in supply-side work (the individuals who are employees, entrepreneurs, traders, goods-producers, etc.) with the demand-side

of the market. This is especially true in contexts of displacement, or situations where the 'supply-side' is made of people who are refugees or displaced people. These intermediaries do the vital job of ensuring to the demand-side of the market that people are credentialed, skilled, identified, and employment-ready. But these intermediaries may not be working at scale, due to context or business model. One role of the Migrant Union could be to link and convene in order to encourage inspiring cross-fertilization among different intermediaries. They could also work together to fill gaps in each other's work and thus create the beginnings of an ecosystem. The Migrant Union might also provide direct advisory or consultation services to these intermediaries, encouraging growth and scale.

While initially market-building functions would be quite tactical (i.e. creating partnerships, engineering market or employment pipelines, or building coalition of willing demand-side market actors), eventually the evolution of these activities could result in major system changes. Take, for example, the ekShop initiative piloted by a2i in Bangladesh.

E-Commerce in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh through a2i's EkShop

What is it? ekShop is an a2i-built e-commerce platform that supports Bangladeshi's in rural areas extending its tradable market, and access to products from around the country. As part of the Migrant Union initiative, its use is being explored in the context of Rohingya refugees producing goods for buyers and customers around the world. While skills-training programs exist in the Rohingya camp Cox's Bazaar, there are few pathways being developed for enabling market access for then selling these goods.

Pilot: the application of the ekShop is currently being explored in the first instance in partnership with international organisations and NGOs teaching sewing classes to a group of Rohingya women. An early opportunity is Thailand as an export market. Going forward, the build out of this approach depends on decisions by the Bangladeshi government with regard to the rights of refugees to work for compensation.

Potential: There is significant potential for refugees and citizens in Bangladesh to make use of e-commerce and more broadly e-markets to export goods and services. Moreover, the opportunity is to build out such a platform that can be accessed and used effectively by all people, anywhere on the move, as well as their partners in host communities. Such potential is planned to be built out through a connected ecosystem of prototyping in multiple locations, and with multiple communities and partners. Critical, furthermore, will be links to market-relevant credentialing of displaced people and related businesses and initiatives, another strand of work being pursued as part of Migrant Union. Furthermore, a further building block would be to establish a payments system that is appropriate to people on the move, as well as host country citizens.

4.5 Representation

Refugee or displaced-person-led advocacy groups are already doing much important work to ascertain rights and ensure that the actual needs and voices of displaced people are at the heart of major policy and governance decisions. Like the Migrant Union, many groups realize that international human rights and refugee covenants have fallen short of their intended purposes, and that governments are increasingly turning to activities like hard border restrictions rather than upholding the rights of displaced people.

The Network for Refugee Voices, for example, participates in international and global convenings of UN and policymakers. They aim to ensure refugee participation in major policy decision-makings in an effort to make sure policies actually correspond to the needs and wants of displaced people and broadly advocate for 'ambitious, effective and sustainable' measures to tackling the challenges faced by displaced people.[35]

Another example is the Global Summit of Refugees, which brings together refugees living in dozens of refugee-hosting countries to discuss and further develop self-representation efforts. These include regional refugee networks, such as: Australian National Committee of Refugee Women, Network for Colombian Victims for Peace in Latin America and the Caribbean (REVICPAZ-LAC), New Zealand National Refugee Association, Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, Refugee Led Organizations Network (Uganda) and Syrian Youth Volunteers- Netherlands.[36]

Countless refugee-led advocacy groups exist at the local levels as well, helping ensure access to basic services such as shelter, medical care, or navigating asylum processes. Groups like RISE in Europe have built networks of these groups to ensure their involvement in policymaking at the national and regional levels.

These groups should be hailed for the important work that they are doing, especially in raising the attention paid to the important issue of refugee representation in policies being created that will affect their lives. The Migrant Union could support a coalition of such advocacy groups looking to increase the focus on the nexus of issues of displacement, livelihoods, and the changing nature of work. Its own work could enhance existing advocacy efforts by modelling the potential of displaced people: i.e. displaced people with credentials are trustworthy and have had their identity and history verified, and thus have the necessary vetting for participation in market economies. To clarify, the Migrant Union would not be run as an advocacy group in itself, but it would support and convene those that already exist, especially those run by displaced people themselves, and emphasize the specific issues needed to enhance livelihood opportunities.

4.6 System Building

While each of these functions deserves attention in and of itself, ultimately credentialing, market-building, and advocacy function together as a system. It is furthermore only through the combined and systematic approach that barriers to scale could really be overcome. For instance, credentialing and market building activities might not be functional if there is not advocacy and negotiation with governments, for instance, to try and ease restrictions on the right to work. The market-building simply won't work without verifiable credentials, as there is no large-scale mechanism to enable market-actors to trust and vet people living far away. Credentialing alone is not useful: digital ID efforts need to have a use or purpose if they are to be valuable.

For these functions to work together as a system, a few other design elements of the Migrant Union are proposed:

1. To avoid falling into the troubles of the current humanitarian model, which provides aid to 'beneficiaries', and which relies on the generosity of private and public donors, the Migrant Union needs to come up with its own system of **self-sustaining financing.** One idea is to create a tithing or taxation sys-

tem, where a small percentage of income is taxed, or where employers pay a small fee to join the Migrant Union. Another idea was to leverage upcoming technologies, such as crypto currency, which would enable the development of a market and could lead to investment opportunities.

2. Together, credentialing and displaced-led advocacy can allow those participating in the Migrant Union to both be more integrated as self-sufficient people into host communities as well as having closer relationships with other communities through economy and business and work. **Eventually, this group could also be represented as a collective that can advocate strongly for each other's needs.** This is the crux of the idea of a 'union' of people and could form the basis for a new consideration of the notion of 'citizenship'. Whereas the Westphalian system relies on a shared sense of identity based on common history, tradition, language, territory and often ethnicity or religion, could the Migrant Union re-conceptualize citizenship rather as based on a shared sense of purpose and solidarity rooted in the common experience of being displaced?

3. The arrangements that are being proposed need not be restricted for use by displaced people – in many ways this is a deepening of access and rights more broadly, not so much through state oversight but through collaboration, information and data sharing, and community and solidarity building. As such, the Migrant Union is part of a broader agenda as the world evolves, more people are on the move, and inter-governmental arrangements become more difficult and possibly less relevant. In this way the work of the Migrant Union could begin to influence **new approaches to governance and human social organization.**

5. Moving Forward

5.1 Next Steps

The aim of the Migrant Union is not to 'own' specific projects, but rather to encourage collaboration and support that builds on and out of existing practice. With this in mind, the following activities are proposed to move the initiative forward:

1. **Understand and share current practice.** Central to the work of the Migrant Union is building on and enhancing emerging practice. So far this has been largely advanced through research, scoping, dialogue and convening. Moving forward, the initiative will continue to understand, share and link relevant practice in order to build out a community of actors that together will bring about new methods and practices that will form the building blocks of the Migrant Union.

2. **Encourage prototyping.** Already the Migrant Union is prototyping through its involvement in supporting efforts in Bangladesh (through a2i's ekShop) and in Turkey (through the UNDP country office and the Turkish Government's Sustainable Development Goals Innovation Accelerator). Again, the Migrant Union does not aim to own or directly oversee projects on the ground. Rather, through its outreach, dialogue and network effects, it aims to support, enhance and help shape prototyping activities that can (a) help to 'show' or 'prove' ways that different functions of the Migrant Union concept can work in reality and (b) rapidly evolve the work of the Migrant Union from tactical moves towards ecosystem-building that could have massive system effects.

3. **Building a credentialing approach.** The Migrant Union will identify a core group of 'anchor tenants': demand-side market actors eager to pioneer and accept a digital ID/credentialing approach for people who are displaced. It is important to understand first of all what minimum common criteria is necessary for demand-side actors to feel that a person's information and credentials have been vetted and can be trusted. This will ensure that these IDs are actually valuable and help result in opening actual livelihood opportunities. It is also important to ensure that the ID approach that is created is safe, private, and user-centric, in addition to being inter-operable so that it does not compromise, but rather enhances, use by individuals seeking Migrant Union 'membership'.

4. **Form & structure.** The Migrant Union's structure will grow out of the community of actors, members, and partners that compose it. Clear leadership is needed in order to ensure cohesion and direction among the different members of the community. At the same time, the Migrant Union encourages the kin of organic growth that ultimately creates true complex ecosystems, and which might only emerge as a result of diversity and decentralization. As such, the Migrant Union does not seek to 'own' all activities or engage in building and managing specific projects, but rather plays a role in mutual shaping and influencing among the activities of its community-members.

5.2 Concluding Remarks

This paper began, like the Migrant Union itself, with a clear challenge, recognized by many, inside and outside of the displacement space. Current approaches and central actors have realized that the system set up to respond to migration and displacement is falling far short of its promised results.

Building on calls by everyone from the High Commissioner to Policy Experts at think tanks like the Center for Global Development to displaced people themselves, the Migrant Union aims to catalyse new approaches to the understanding of and practical response to challenges faced by displaced people. At the heart of its approach is an attention to livelihoods, specifically those leveraging the opportunities presented by the Future of Work, with the aim of creating sustainable and future-oriented pathways that could open the possibility of building lives of agency and dignity for people who are currently excluded from these realities.

The Migrant Union seeks to build on, enhance, and support the many ongoing existing activities already working towards these goals. Rather than add to a growing list of such initiatives, the Migrant Union is looking for the connective tissue that would enable existing practice to scale. At a tactical, functional level, this means connecting and linking various actors to each other, identifying the barriers to scale and encouraging or creating pathways and tools to overcome these barriers. This includes activities around ID and credentialing, market-building, advocacy, and self-sustaining financing models.

Yet each of these tactical and practical functions ultimately points to much broader possibilities. For instance, in creating a connected group of individuals who are displaced, linked together through a common sharing of information and similar aspiration to overcome the challenges of displacement and rebuild lives, is the work of the Migrant Union pointing towards a potential new model of citizenship and social organization? If these individuals become linked through a market, could it be one which perhaps one day makes use of technological advancements and results in its own crypto currency? Could advocacy and negotiation activities lead to the creation of new institutions, or even new kinds of legislation? These are but some of the possible developments that have the possibility of growing organically out of the Migrant Union, particularly in light of broader changes the world is seeing in the nature of borders, institutions and the environment – the elements that compose the governance of the world as we currently know it.

What is clear is that in the context of drastic global changes, new approaches are needed that tackle these issues and open up new and promising avenues for us all.

6. Endnotes

[1] https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/The_General_Theory_of_Employment,_Interest_and_Money

[2] UNHCR. 'Figures at a Glance'. 2019. Link.

[3] Migration Policy Institute. 'World Confronts Largest Humanitarian Crisis Since WWII'. 2014. Link.

[4] The UNHCR defines the term 'refugee' according to the 1951 Refugee Convention as: 'someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. While this is the legal definition and considered the standard and accepted one, alternative and more expansive definitions of refugees seem to be on the rise. One notable example is the Refugee Investment Network's (RIN) very expansive definition, which uses the term to denote vulnerable host populations as well (RIN. 'Paradigm Shift: How Investment Can Unlock the Potential of Refugees.' 2019. Link.)

[5] IOM. 'Migration and Climate Change'. 2019. Link.

[6] A telling example is that of Guatemala. According to a 2019 article in *The New Yorker,* a recent spike in Guatemalan migrant families, and children at the US border (50,000 families were apprehended in 2018, 'twice as many as the year before') can be attributed to droughts and weather unpredictability in the western highlands of the country; a rural and poverty-stricken region which depends on agriculture and which is especially vulnerable to climate change. [Blitzer, J. 'How Climate Change is Fueling the US Border Crisis.' *The New Yorker.* Accessed July 17 2019. Link.]

[7] UNHCR & RIN. 'Paradigm Shift: How Investment can Unlock the Potential of Refugees.' 2019. Link.

[8] UNHCR. 'Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note.' Accessed: July 22 2019. Link.

[9] For a more complete list of motivations of host states for barring refugees' livelihood opportunities see the *Global Refugee Work Rights Report 2014* by Asylum Access (Link) as well as Roger Zetter and Heloise Ruaudel's 2016 report *Refugees' Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets – An Assessment* (Link).

[10] Buscher, Dale. 'Humanitarian Response: Evolution or Revolution'. Overture. Accessed: May 5 2019.Link.

[11] Buscher, Dale. 'Humanitarian Response: Evolution or Revolution'. Overture. Accessed: May 5 2019.Link.

[12] UNHCR. 'Funding Update 2018'. Accessed August 2019. Link.

[13] UNHCR. 'Refugees bear cost of massive underfunding.' 2018. Link.

[14] UNHCR. 'Highlighted Underfunded Situations.' Accessed August 2019. Link.

[15] Refugee Investment Network. 'Paradigm Shift: How Investment Can Unlock the Potential of Refugees'. 2019. Link.

[16] KIVA. 'KIVA Releases Its First World Refugee Fund Impact Report.' June 20 2018. Accessed July 17 2019. Link.

[17] Oxford Martin School. 'Migration and The Economy: Economic Realities, Social Impacts & Political Choices.' September 2018. Accessed July 22 2019. Link.

[18] Statement of Mr. Henkin of the United States, U.N. Doc. E/AC.32/SR.37, Aug, 16, 1950, at 12.

[19] These documents recognize that excluding migrants and refugees, as well as other economically vulnerable or marginalized populations, from access to formal livelihoods and decent work is denying said individuals their universal human rights. Practically, denial of formal employment may also lead to poverty and desperation and thus an increase in work in informal or illegal sectors, where individuals are not protected from abuse or worse – human trafficking or forced sex work, drug and gang participation, etc.

[20] **Livelihoods:** In this paper, 'livelihoods' is defined in accordance with the UNHCR's *Global Strategy for Livelihoods,* as 'activities that allow people to secure the basic necessities of life, such as food, water, shelter, and clothing. Engaging in Livelihood activities means acquiring the knowledge, skills, social network, raw materials, and other resources to meet individual or collective needs on a sustainable basis with dignity'. It refers broadly not only to jobs as employees, but also trade, business, e-commerce, etc.

Decent Work: In this paper, 'decent work' is used in accordance with the International Labour Organization's (ILO) definition of 'work that is productive; ensures equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men; delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families; provides prospects for personal developments; gives workers the freedom to express their concerns, organize and participate in decisions that affect their working lives' and 'receive adequate income, social protection, and other benefits'.

[21] Center for Global Development. 'The Economic and Fiscal Effects of Granting Refugees Formal Labor Market Access'. October 9,2018. Accessed: August 2019. Link.

[22] The key instruments, explored in depth in many other studies and reports, that enable the right to livelihood access are sketched out below.

- International Human Rights Law: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- International Refugee Law: 1951 Refugee Convention (specific to those with refugee status, and these rights accrue given the length of time a displaced person has lived on the territory of a host country
- Regional Agreements (including in Europe, Africa, Americas, and Arab States)
- National Laws of many countries including some which are not signatory to international legal documents. In some of these states, for instance in Lebanon, refugees are granted the right to work but only in specific sectors, while loopholes to restrictions exist allowing for part-time or self-employed work.

[23] ODI. 'Livelihoods in Displacement: From Refugee Perspectives to Aid Agency Response.' Accessed August 2019. Link.

[24] ILO. 'ILO's Refugee Response'. Accessed August 2019. Link.

[25] For a more complete list of barriers to refugees' livelihood opportunities see the *Global Refugee Work Rights Report 2014* by Asylum Access (Link) as well as Roger Zetter and Heloise Ruaudel's 2016 report *Refugees' Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets – An Assessment* (Link).

[26] Ticktin, M. *The Casualties of Care.* 2011.

[27] ILO. 'Towards Decent Work'. Accessed July 2019. Link.

[28] Accenture. 'It's Just Learning. Just Not As We Know It.' Accessed July 2019. Link.

[29] ILO. 'Towards Decent Work.' Accessed July 2019. Link.

[30] Accenture. 'It's Just Learning. Just Not As We Know It.' Accessed July 2019. Link.

[31] Corporaal, G. (2019) Intermediaries should be worried about the platform economy. The iLabour Project, Oxford Internet Institute. https://ilabour.oii.ox.ac.uk/intermediaries-should-be-worried-about-the-platform-economy/

[32] Accenture (2017) New Skills Now: Inclusion in the digital economy. https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/pdf-63/accenture-new-skills-now-inclusion-in-the-digital.pdf.

[33] Key Informant interview, Katie Schlinder, Director, RESI Programme, International Trade Center.

[34] UNHCR. 'The Global Compact on Refugees.' 26 June 2018. Link.

[35] Network for Refugee Voices. 'Goals'. Accessed August 2019. Link.

[36] Forced Migration Review. 'The Global Summit of Refugees and the Importance of refugee self-representation.' Accessed August 2019. Link.

7. Selected Bibliography

Accenture. 'It's Learning. Just Not As We Know It: How to accelerate skills acquisition in the age of intelligent technologies'. G20 Young Entrepreneurs' Alliance. Accessed 3 August 2019. https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/thought-leadership-assets/pdf/accenture-education-and-technology-skills-research.pdf

Accenture. 'New Skills Now: Inclusion in the Digital Economy.' Accessed 2 August 2019. https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/pdf-63/accenture-new-skills-now-inclusion-in-the-digital.pdf

Barbelet, Veronique and Caitlin Wake. 'Livelihoods in Displacement: From Refugee Perspectives to aid agency response'. HPG Report. September 2017. Accessed 7 August 2019. https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11729.pdf

Blitzer, Jonathan, and Mauricio Lima. 'How Climate Change Is Fuelling the U.S. Border Crisis', 3 April 2019. https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/how-climate-change-is-fuelling-the-us-border-crisis.

Buscher, Dale. 'Humanitarian Response: Evolution or Revolution?' Overture Global. Accessed 6 August 2019. http://www.overtureglobal.io/story/humanitarian-response-evolution-or-revolution.

Clemens, Michael, Cindy Huang and Jimmy Graham. 'The Economic and Fiscal Effects of Granting Refugees Formal Labor Market Access'. Center for Global Development. October 9 2018. Accessed August 7 2019. https://www.cgdev.org/publication/economic-and-fiscal-effects-granting-refugees-formal-labor-market-access-brief

'Global Refugee Work Rights Report: Taking the Movement from Theory to Practice'. Asylum Access and the Refugee Work Rights Coalition.' Accessed 28 July 2019. https://asylumaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FINAL_Global-Refugee-Work-Rights-Report-2014_Interactive.pdf

'Goals'. NETWORK FOR REFUGEE VOICES. Accessed 6 August 2019. http://www.networkforrefugeevoices.org/goals.html.

Goldin, Ian, et al. 'Citi GPS: Global Perspectives & Solutions'. Oxford Martin School and Citibank. September 2018. Accessed 7 August 2019. https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/reports/2018_OMS_Citi_Migration_GPS.pdf

International Labour Organization. 'Digital Labour Platforms and the Future of Work: Towards Decent Work in the Online World'. Accessed 5 August 2019. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_645337.pdf

International Labour Organization. 'ILO's Refugee Response'. 5 April 2017. Accessed 7 August 2019. http://www.ilo.org/ankara/projects/WCMS_379375/lang--en/index.htm.

Kluge, John, Timothy Docking and Joanne Ke Edelman. 'Paradigm Shift: How Investment can unlock the potential of refugees'. Refugee Investment Network. Accessed July 27 2019. https://refugeeinvestments.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RIN_Paradigm_Shift.pdf

'Migration and Climate Change'. International Organization for Migration, 29 January 2015. https://www.iom.int/migration-and-climate-change-0.

Oxford Internet Institute. 'Intermediaries Should Be Worried about the Platform Economy | The ILabour Project'. Accessed 6 August 2019. https://ilabour.oii.ox.ac.uk/intermediaries-should-be-worried-about-the-platform-economy/.

'The Economic and Fiscal Effects of Granting Refugees Formal Labor Market Access (Brief)'. Center For Global Development. Accessed 6 August 2019. https://www.cgdev.org/publication/economic-and-fiscal-effects-granting-refugees-formal-labor-market-access-brief.

'The Global Compact on Refugees'. Final draft, 26 June 2018. Accessed 7 August 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/5b3295167.pdf

'The Global Summit of Refugees and the Importance of Refugee Self-Representation | Forced Migration Review'. Accessed 6 August 2019. https://www.fmreview.org/GuidingPrinciples20/globalsummitofrefugees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 'Figures at a Glance'. UNHCR. Accessed 6 August 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html.

———. 'Funding Update: 2018'. UNHCR. Accessed 7 August 2019. http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Funding%20Overview%2031%20December%202018.pdf

———. 'Global Strategy for Livelihoods'. UNHCR. Accessed 6 August 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/protection/livelihoods/530f107b6/global-strategy-livelihoods.html.

———. 'Highlighted Underfunded Situations in 2018'. Accessed 7 August 2019. http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Brochure%20on%20Underfunded%20Situations%20-%20September%202018.pdf#_ga=2.76772309.1577517355.1564672885-1417188927.1551772376

———. 'Refugees Bear Cost of Massive Underfunding'. UNHCR. Accessed 6 August 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/10/5bbc57d94/refugees-bear-cost-massive-underfunding.html.

Viloria, Mauricio et al. 'The Global Summit of Refugees and the importance of refugee self-representation.' Forced Migration Review 59: October 2019. Accessed 7 August 2019. https://www.fmreview.org/GuidingPrinciples20/globalsummitofrefugees

'World Confronts Largest Humanitarian Crisis since WWII | Migrationpolicy.Org'. Accessed 6 August 2019. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/world-confronts-largest-humanitarian-crisis-wwii.

Zetter, Roger and Heloise Ruaudel. 'Refugees' Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets – An Assessment.' KNOMAD: Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development.' September 2016. Access August 7 2019. https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/KNOMAD%20Study%201-%20Part%20II-%20Refugees%20Right%20to%20Work%20-%20An%20Assessment.pdf

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.