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Local Faith Actors and the Migration–Development Nexus: A Literature Review

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Abstract:

Since the turn of the millennium, the migration–development nexus has gained renewed attention within international organisations' policies and academic debates. However, in these debates, the roles played by faith-based actors in general, and local faith actors (LFAs) in particular, have so far only been marginally addressed. This fails to reflect the growing literature and practice examples of LFAs' engagements with both sustainable development and migration. This review thus aims at outlining gaps in the existing literature and suggesting links between local faith actors' engagements and the migration–development nexus. After a brief section on methodology, limitations and terminology, this paper focuses on the key debates around the migration–development nexus to which LFAs' engagements with development and with migration are particularly relevant. The central part of the paper outlines existing research and policy documents on LFAs, migration and development that directly speak to these debates. The last section summarises key observations and highlights implications to further explore the intersections among these areas of academic research and policymaking.

Local Faith Actors and the Migration–Development Nexus: A Literature Review

Introduction

The migration–development nexus has been featured in policy and academic documents for over twenty years (e.g. Skeldon 1997; Van Hearand & Nyberg-Sørensen 2003; Piper 2009; Andersson & Siegel 2019). Scholars have discussed how development can influence the movement of people and how migration can affect social and economic change in sending and destination countries. At policy level, migration is described as a cross-cutting issue to all Sustainable Development Goals, and the two Global Compacts – the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees – are interlinked with development policies (IOM 2017). However, faith actors, and local faith actors (LFAs) in particular, are only marginally included in these frameworks, despite the growing literature and focus on localisation, community engagement and the roles of religious and traditional actors in development and migration (e.g. Marshall & van Saanen 2007; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Wilson & Mavelli 2016; Tomalin et al. 2019; Wurtz & Wilkinson 2020).

The aim of this literature review is to highlight and establish links between key debates around the migration–development nexus and existing literature on LFAs' engagements with migration and development, through examples from academic and policy resources. The paper seeks to contribute to enriching current academic and policy debates on these issues, in particular looking ahead at the post-2030 Development Agenda. In fact, it will provide insights into how and why LFAs can be (further) engaged in policymaking processes around migration and development. This will be crucial in order to achieve a post-2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that properly takes into account the roles of LFAs and the interconnections between migration and development, and that takes further steps towards the implementation of more effective multi-stakeholder and localisation approaches.

A total of 122 documents have been reviewed for this discussion paper, including academic articles and grey literature, i.e. reports by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs) and intergovernmental organisations. This selection is the result of multiple searches on different databases (Google Scholar, specific development and migration academic journals and websites, ALNAP, the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities resource library). The terms used in various combinations to conduct the searches were "migration", "displacement", "development", "faith", "religion", "migration–development nexus". Searches were conducted in English, although I also consulted some documents in Italian, Spanish, German and French, where relevant. I used Zotero to store the documents and its tagging tools to categorise them. I then conducted the analysis based on the tags and on further elements emerging from in-depth analysis.

This paper has several limitations. First of all, its scope is potentially much too broad to be addressed in a single paper. However, this review focuses only on those issues within the vast body of work around the migration–development nexus that are specifically connected to the existing literature on LFAs' engagements with migration and development. This means that, for instance, within the realms of migration and development, the paper does not address specific areas like humanitarianism, mobility, diasporas, each single Sustainable Development Goal etc. At the same time, some issues like localisation and social cohesion are addressed since they specifically interlace with acknowledged engagements of LFAs with key aspects of the migration–development nexus.

The term "local faith actors" is used in this paper in a broad sense. Following Wilkinson, they are understood as ranging "from relatively large national organizations to small groups of individuals, and

individual religious leaders with different levels of power and religious affiliation across local and national levels" (Wilkinson 2018, 113). This can also include national or local chapters of international FBOs (e.g. Islamic Relief Worldwide) as well as local members of international faith-based networks (e.g. Act Alliance). The use of the term "faith actors" rather than "religious actors" intends to expand the landscape beyond established religious traditions and institutions, and to reflect academic literature and policy documents that also adopt it in an inclusive way (e.g. UNHCR 2018; UN IATF 2020; Kraft & Wilkinson 2020).

The paper is organised into four sections. The first section is an introduction to the definitions, methodology and limitations of this study. The second section outlines key debates within the migration–development nexus that are relevant to areas where LFAs' engagements have been documented in literature and policy documents on migration and development. These are organised into three sub-sections: first, around the idea that migration is a "development resource" (Nyberg-Sørensen et al. 2003, 293); second, dealing with the argument that development can be a "solution" to migration; and third, focusing on how migration is understood within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The third section connects these key issues to existing evidence on how LFAs respond to migration and engage in development processes. In particular, it will focus on localisation and other relevant frameworks in international migration and development policy; on how looking at LFAs can help build a more nuanced understanding of migration and development; on the gender dimension of these phenomena; and on (re)integration and social cohesion. The concluding section summarises key observations and highlights implications for further exploring the intersections among these areas of academic research and policymaking.

The Migration–Development Nexus: Key Relevant Debates
Migration as a "Development Resource"

One of the main debates on the migration–development nexus revolves around the theory that migration can and does act as a resource of development, i.e. that migration leads to improved economic and social conditions in countries of origin. Since Skeldon (1997) first highlighted that migration and development are deeply interlinked processes, an increasing amount of literature has been produced at academic and policy level on the migration–development nexus. In 2003, the International Organization for Migration published a collection of papers on the nexus featuring three case studies from Afghanistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka (Van Hearand & Nyberg-Sørensen 2003). In the concluding chapter, Nyberg-Sørensen et al. (2003) stress the need for coherent policies and interventions and identify ways in which migrants, in particular diasporas, can act as "a development resource" (Nyberg-Sørensen et al. 2003, 293), e.g. through remittances and transnational political and economic activities and, in some cases, through return. A number of international initiatives have sought to track the development of the nexus and to foster cooperation among different actors, most importantly the Global Forum on Migration and Development. Initiated in 2007 as the result of the 2006 UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, it draws together different intergovernmental, governmental and civil society actors through yearly regional meetings focusing on different aspects of the nexus. In the international policy context, remittances have often been referred to as one of the main phenomena through which the positive effects of migration on development could be assessed (e.g. World Bank 2006). In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, a United Nations Development Programme report (UNDP 2009) argued that better, less restrictive admission and treatment policies for migrants would benefit human development. Similar arguments were developed with regards to how migration can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (e.g. ODI 2018), especially through facilitating the growth of remittances (e.g. KNOMAD 2019).

However, scholars have criticised this approach depicting migrants as agents of development from different perspectives. Piper (2009) has illustrated how other aspects of migration and development had been left out of policies and academic debates alike, like South–South migration (as opposed to South–North migration), those who stay (as opposed to those who migrate), and the social dimensions of development (as opposed to economic dimensions). Several academics have questioned the lack of focus on the gender dimension of debates on the implications of migration on development (e.g. Dannecker 2009; Bailey 2010). In particular, Bastia has illustrated that migration, including female migration, does not necessarily have a positive impact on gender equality, but can rather also lead to a reinforcement of existing power relationships (Bastia 2013). Bachan has added that positive change for women in countries of origin can only become structural if it is supported through systemic policies (Bachan 2018).

Several scholars have also pointed out the importance of not replicating postcolonial views in approaching the migration–development nexus and the need to take into account the context of globalisation and its often disempowering impact on African states and diaspora communities (e.g. Davies 2007). Faist and Fauser (2011) have criticised the view that migration is beneficial to both countries of origin and of settlement, advocating for a shift in perspective towards a transnational approach that takes into account complex economic, social and political networks and exchanges across borders. Glick Schiller (2020) has further developed this criticism by suggesting a multi-scalar approach in which migrants and development institutions are seen as interconnected at various levels and the local and the global are indissoluble, as well as a shift from development and migration debates to dispossession and displacement (ibid).

Development as a "Solution" to Migration

Another key debate about the migration–development nexus focuses on the notion that development leads to a decline in migration. This theory is often based on the assumption that migration is to be seen as a problem to be solved. However, De Haas (2020) argued that the tendency in academia, policy and the media to depict "development as a 'solution' to perceived migration problems" is fundamentally misleading, since development typically leads to increased levels of migration. Already in 1990, Cernea had called for social scientists to overcome the separation between the study of refugees and of populations forcibly displaced by development projects (Cernea 1990). Numerous studies have followed and analysed the ways in which development can be and often is a cause of uprooting (e.g. Forced Migration Review 2002 and De Wet 2005).

More recently, academics have explicitly criticised the growing connection between migration control and securitisation and development cooperation. According to Faist, this connection is "one way of increasing legitimacy for stricter controls because it alludes to mutual benefits for all actors involved in North and South, East and West: the highly skilled are free to circulate and everybody else may – in the long run – stay in their home country" (Faist 2008, 38). In his view, focusing on transnational groups and social spaces allows a better understanding of the sometimes contrasting interests that communities in origin and destination countries might have (Faist 2008).

As regards migration management in relation to development, Adamson and Tsourapas have pointed out that, in what they call "developmental migration states", *emigration* is encouraged by nations in the Global South precisely as a strategy towards further development (Adamson and Tsourapas 2019). This change of perspective from the Global North to the Global South thus allows for further criticism of the theory that more development leads to less migration.

Migration and the 2030 Agenda

Migration is addressed in the 2030 Agenda as a cross-cutting issue relevant – directly or indirectly – to each Sustainable Development Goal (Migration Data Portal 2019; ODI 2018). SDG 10 (Reducing Inequality Within and Among Countries), target 10.7 directly prescribes the "facilitation of orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies" (UN 2016b). The 2030 Agenda also recognised the need not to overlook migrants' rights and the vulnerabilities they often face and to enhance migration governance and improve cooperation between development and migration actors, aimed at more coherent policies (IOM 2017; Migration Data Portal 2019; ODI 2018).

A particularly important and relevant dimension of the 2030 Agenda for this paper is that of localisation. At the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the UN Secretary-General called for the humanitarian agenda to be "as local as possible, as international as necessary" (UN 2016). This is reflected in the priorities set by global initiatives like the Grand Bargain (2016) and the Charter4Change (2016). The engagement of "faith actors and leaders", including those belonging to networks such as Caritas and Act Alliance, is also mentioned as part of the localisation process, while stressing the plurality of ways in which "local actors" are understood and defined across different documents and initiatives, and subsequently calling for a more thorough assessment of existing capacities at local level and how to sustain them (ODI 2018b). However, "local actors" are understood and defined across different documents and initiatives in a variety of ways that can range from national to community level, as reflected by the terminology used in this paper.

Overall, critiques of the assumptions that migration leads to development or that development prevents unwanted migration push towards a more nuanced, more articulated understanding of migration and development as multifaceted, complex and contextualised phenomena, as does the 2030 Agenda with its localisation strategy. This is also the rationale of Andersson & Siegel, who highlight the need to address not only the economic but also the social dimensions of development in a more holistic way (Andersson & Siegel 2019, 35), as well as "migration aspirations, failed migration attempts and involuntary immobility" (Andersson & Siegel 2019: 34).

In these policy documents and academic debates, there is very limited focus on the roles played by faith actors in general, and by local faith actors in particular. The next section will therefore highlight some of the ways in which LFAs have been engaging in aspects of migration and development policy and practice that are relevant to these discussions.

LFAs, Migration and Development
LFAs and National/International Policy Frameworks on Migration and Development

While none of the SDGs explicitly refer to faith communities, in 2016 a Special Summit of the World Humanitarian Forum focused on religious engagement, affirming that they "have a unique comparative advantage in humanitarian contexts: they have an established relationship of trust and familiarity with local communities in which they are embedded" (World Humanitarian Summit 2016). USAID has collated a number of "impact stories", highlighting how the agency engaged faith-based and local community organisations within the framework of their sustainable development programmes, e.g. on reconciliation in Sri Lanka and social cohesion in the Central African Republic (USAID 2019). However, as Haustein and Tomalin (2019) point out, the participation of faith actors in consultation processes preceding the formulation of the SDGs and in their implementation has been uneven and mostly

confined to the international realm, while local communities' needs, faced with local politics and administration, remained separated, at least to a certain extent.

Following UNHCR's 2012 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection, faith actors have also lobbied and organised to engage in the drafting and implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and of the Global Compact on Refugees, and partially succeeded in the inclusion of "faith-based organisations" as "relevant stakeholders" in the Compacts (IOM 2018; UNHCR 2018), e.g. regarding resettlement and social cohesion for refugees and local communities. On the other hand, Wurtz & Wilkinson (2020) have provided a reading of the Global Compact on Refugees from the perspective of Southern and local faith actors, highlighting how the Global Compact's framework fails to appreciate the different ways in which they support forced migrants, e.g. through addressing their spiritual and psychosocial needs, through the civic engagement of local communities, and through supporting self-reliance in displaced populations beyond international interventions.

Engaging LFAs in international development and migration policies can be seen as part of the localisation process, a key approach of the 2030 Agenda. In 2017, the Forum on Localising Response to Humanitarian Need, focusing on the role of religious and faith-based organisations issued recommendations on how to support the engagement of local faith actors in development, including addressing chronic underfunding and providing capacity building for faith and for development actors to enhance two-way literacy and foster cooperation. A recent edited volume collects examples and reflections on the complexities of engaging LFAs in international development (Kraft & Wilkinson 2020). In it, Duff et al. outline some of the main mobilisation strategies (e.g. through dialogue based on religious texts and through addressing both the spiritual as well as the scientific dimension of developmental issues) and of the main challenges (e.g. risk of instrumentalisation and politicisation of LFAs' engagement). In fact, LFAs are not exempt from power dynamics and, as Estella Carpi has noted, engaging them does not necessarily mean improving the effectiveness of support to local communities. In her words, "localising means neither presupposing – or over-emphasising – the socio-emotional proximity of displaced populations to the local church or mosque, nor institutionalising all local forms of support; nor does it mean imagining local religious authorities as being best placed to ensure successful aid provision, regardless of contextual specificities" (Carpi 2018).

There is also evidence that LFAs can influence national legislation in several areas of social development, including with regards to migration and long-term solutions to displacement. For example, Polese (2013) has described the ways in which Catholic groups in Italy have historically advocated for more inclusive migration policies by directly lobbying political parties and mobilising public opinion. Although their advocacy efforts were not always successful, there is evidence that they did contribute to making sure, for instance, that in the "Bossi-Fini" Law No. 189/2002 "a regularisation programme for domestic and care workers was introduced and, after the bill became law, [it] was massively extended to all the other categories of workers" (Polese 2013: 215). In Brazil (Moreira 2017) and in the US (Ray 2018) national religious organisations have played important roles in pushing governments towards improving their resettlement policies.

Furthermore, in the EU, LFAs have been at the centre of initiatives to establish safe and legal routes to refuge that are complementary to governmental resettlement programmes, like private sponsorship programmes. In Canada, private sponsorship started in the late 1970s and has mostly been implemented by LFAs (Hyndman et al. 2017), including by small groups of faith community members (Tito & Cochand 2017). Another example of alternative safe and legal routes to resettlement is that of the "humanitarian corridors", an ecumenical initiative established in 2016 in Italy and run jointly by the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Waldensian Church and the Italian Federation of Evangelic Churches. The initiative was made possible by the level of trust between governmental institutions and the LFAs

involved, and by their ability to advocate and find appropriate legal and political grounds (Trotta 2016; Collyer et al. 2017). The initiative has since 2016 expanded to include corridors to France and Belgium (Humanitarian Corridors 2020). In some cases, LFAs even challenge legal frameworks around migration, as in the case of church asylum (*Kirchenasyl*), a network of churches in Germany and elsewhere which are ready to host migrants at risk of deportation (Hillgruber 2018).

Although the initiatives described in the last two paragraphs are mainly migration-related, they nevertheless demonstrate the LFAs' potential to influence national policies and legislation in ways that are or can be relevant to reaching sustainable development goals, e.g. in terms of supporting decent work for all (SDG target 8.8 "Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment") and reducing inequalities among countries (SDG target 10.7 "Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies"). The examples also show that the engagement of LFAs in national and international development and migration policies calls for greater, more context-related scrutiny and invites a deeper understanding of local dynamics that can help in rethinking secular Northern- and Western-centric frameworks. As suggested by Carpi's call for "contextualisation" rather than "localisation", and in consonance with some of the key points around the migration–development nexus outlined at the beginning of this paper, there is also a need for more nuanced understandings of migration and development, and of the links between the two phenomena.

Towards a More Nuanced Understanding of Migration and Development

Investigating the roles of LFAs in migration and development processes can be helpful precisely in reaching a more holistic way to understand and approach migration- and development-related issues and policies. As partly discussed in the previous section, LFAs often engage in supporting and even enabling long-term solutions to displacement and they advocate for and implement resettlement programmes, private sponsorship programmes and humanitarian corridors. LFAs can also play key roles in enabling return, as in the case of Machazians in Mozambique after the civil war. In fact, as Lubkemann (2002) reported, displaced Machazian people's traditional beliefs made them reluctant to go back to their homes, since they thought that loose spirits of dead soldiers who had not been buried were still present in the area. Local communities and churches organised ceremonies to "send home" these spirits and allow for return (Lubkemann 2002). This shows how LFAs can play important roles in facilitating the implementation of long-term solutions to displacement by taking into account religious and traditional elements that are deeply connected to migrants' experiences and choices.

In fact, people who are forced to leave their home are also forced to find new ways to understand and engage their cultural identity and traditions. Oliver-Smith argues that cultural identity, including faith-related traditions, are often at the core of individual and collective resistance to abandoning one's place of origin (Oliver-Smith 2005). This is exemplified by the case of the Chinantecs and Mazatecs religious or traditional leaders in Mexico, who played prominent roles in the community and adapted traditional symbols to reflect the fight against threats of forced resettlement (Ibid).

Even remittances, which are central to debates on the migration–development nexus, can be better understood if we take into account the roles played by LFAs. Garbin has illustrated how moral economies and religious belongings at different levels are intertwined with the process of collecting and sending money "home", in this case between Kimbanguist communities in the diaspora and the Democratic Republic of Congo. For instance, as Garbin reports,

> *[i]n the Kimbanguist church, what is given and how it is given is perceived to impact the efficacy of spiritual, and to some extent material, rewards. For instance, increasing rivalry about the rightful "ownership" of a chicken farm development project ended up dividing one of the London parishes, creating a conflict about money collections associated with the project. Eventually the farm was set up in Nkamba, but when the electricity was switched on, part of the infrastructure caught fire. The accident was seen by many as a divine response to the fact that the* nsinsani *money funding the project embodied negative spiritual forces linked to distrust and jealousy. (Garbin 2018: 4)*

At the same time, Garbin also suggests that sacred remittances also reflect power dynamics between different diaspora groups and between diasporas and communities in the country of origin. As he puts it, "sacred remittance, 'global money', may generate a diversity of transnational linkages between donors and recipients, but they remain embedded in landscapes of status and power" (Garbin 2018: 14). This clearly exemplifies why taking into account LFAs and their roles can enhance policymakers' and academics' understanding of key issues at the intersection of development and migration.

Through their research on African Initiated Christianity, Öhlmann, Gräb and Frost have demonstrated that the perspectives of religious communities from the Global South can contribute to sustainable development and also be key to reframing Western and Northern notions of development, towards a decolonisation of development and beyond functional, instrumental engagements of LFAs (Öhlmann, Gräb & Frost 2020). In the recently edited volume *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonisation of Development*, Werner argues that "the moral and spiritual basis for a new concept of development can only come from bodies which reach deeper then secular governmental agencies, as fundamental values and spiritual orientations are at stake" (Werner 2020: 57). Here, Werner refers specifically to environmental challenges and their consequences on forced displacement (both within Africa and to other continents). Interestingly, Werner also stresses the need for cooperation between African Initiated Churches other Christian communities and other denominations in Africa to provide a joint response to these challenges, and warns against the idealisation of African Initiated Churches and their engagements with sustainable development (Werner 2020: 66–67). This resonates with the calls for "contextualisation" rather than generalisations about the roles of LFAs mentioned at the end of the previous section.

LFAs and the Gender Dimension of Development and Migration

Discussions around the gender dimension of development and migration typically consider faith-based actors as a traditionalist force, generally hindering efforts to advance women's empowerment and LGBTIQ rights. While there is evidence that some LFAs refuse to condemn practices like forced marriage or marital rape or to engage in certain aspects of sexual and reproductive health service provision (e.g. Women's Refugee Commission 2016), many are engaged in promoting gender equality and combating violence against women and girls, as in the case of the Southern Africa Development Community's Interfaith Briefs on sexual and reproductive health and rights, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence (SADC 2020). In Kenya, Parsitau (2011) described how internally displaced women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence were supported by LFAs, including local churches. Most notably, they mobilised their own faith not only to cope with the trauma, but also to build a collective process of empowerment. As she puts it,

> *[t]hese vulnerable women used faith, texts and scriptures to reinvent and redefine what it means to be an internally displaced Christian woman living in a camp within a country that failed to protect its own people;*

they have ultimately used these tools, resources and metaphors for empowerment to reclaim their place in society. (Parsitau 2011: 509)

A recent study on LFAs supporting survivors of gender-based violence among internally displaced persons in Colombia also highlighted that religion is a "defining characteristic, shaping their motivation as well as way of responding" (Le Roux & Cadavid Valencia 2020: 244), and is therefore not to be overlooked or marginalised, but rather taken into account "in the design and funding of programming". Moreover, the study reinforced existing evidence that female religious leaders and lay leaders are particularly active in responding to issues like sexual violence, often more than formal religious leaders, i.e. head pastors in this case.

Indeed, we need to remind ourselves that women of faith, including those who lead women's groups or educational and other activities in churches, mosques etc. are less publicly visible than male religious leaders in many contexts. Muslim women in particular are often overlooked by international organisations because they do not appear to conform to a Western notion of empowerment. In these regards, Marshall & Hayward showed that, while women of faith are mostly engaged in peacebuilding activities at local level, away from formal arenas, their contributions are often key to "shaping religious traditions and their community's religious response to conflict and peace" (Marshall & Hayward 2011: 16).

Contrary to general assumptions, a study by the Organisation for Refuge, Asylum and Migration (2012) showed that there is no significant difference between faith- and non-faith-based NGOs in how they approach some gender issues. It concluded that "those who said that their religious or spiritual beliefs guided their work were as willing to serve LGBTIQ refugees as those whose motivations were not faith-based" (ORAM 2012). A significant example in this area is La 72, a shelter on the migration route in Mexico, close to the border to Guatemala. Inspired by Franciscan values, they offer accommodation and spiritual, legal and psychosocial support to migrants and refugees, with programmes specifically targeting LGBTIQ people (Olayo-Méndez 2017). For instance, they offer separate accommodation, promote LBGTIQ participation in religious gatherings and other community activities and offer gender- and sexuality-sensitive counselling and healthcare (Wurtz & Wilkinson 2020: 152). La 72 works in collaboration with UN agencies but receives no funding from the government, in order to keep its independence from local authorities and international organisations (Wurtz & Wilkinson 2020: 151). Another interesting example is that of the Refugee Ministry at the Metropolitan Community Church in Toronto, described by McGuire. In this case, the Metropolitan Community Church developed a digital story-telling project with LGBTIQ+ refugees who were able to share their experiences with each other and with other members of the church community, provided they were willing to do so (McGuire 2018). While this project required the mobilisation of considerable resources and its results were not widely disseminated due to the sensitivity of the topic, it raised important questions about the positive and negative effects of working on and sharing refugee trauma narratives through digital storytelling.

At the same time, religious and gender identities can also be used by LFAs to mobilise development aid. In her study on Saharawi displaced people, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014) analysed the ways in which the Polisario Front – the authority of the Saharawi people who have been displaced in the Western part of the Sahara desert since 1975 – has developed and propagated a discourse representing Saharawi women as independent and powerful as a result of conflict and displacement (the opposite of the stereotyped refugee victim and the subjugated Muslim woman) to mobilise development aid from specific NGOs and FBOs. The Polisario has, thus, in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's view, developed a "gynocentric politics of international relations" as politics of survival (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014:10). This, however, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh holds, can lead to the exclusion from aid of "non-ideal" refugees who do not fit into that particular discourse.

If secularism can often be associated with processes of development, especially from a Western and Northern perspective, this is not always the case. As Dannecker illustrated, in Bangladesh, Malaysia is perceived as a role model, a fellow Muslim country where the process of Islamisation coincided with better economic development than in Bangladesh (Dannecker, 2009). However, the identification of Islamisation and development had different meanings for different groups of migrants. *Female migrants* who moved from Bangladesh to Malaysia to seek employment started to oppose the association between religious values and women's oppression in their country of origin, e.g. by supporting other women who wished to leave and pointing at the Malaysian example of coexistence of Islamisation and greater female empowerment. At the same time, many *male migrants*, once returned, used the link between Islamisation and development in Malaysia as a tool to justify more restrictive approaches to women's rights and contributed to the growth of Islamic parties and organisations, which has, in turn, reduced opportunities for women to work outside the house and to migrate (Dannecker 2009). It is evident here that communities of faith can and do build their own systems of values and meaning connected to religion, development and migration, and that these can be very diverse even within the same faith community and regarding the same issue, i.e. gender-related power imbalance. Once again, it becomes clear that taking a closer look at the roles played by faith and LFAs is key to achieving a more thorough understanding of gender-related aspects of development and migration.

LFAs Engaging in Processes of (Re)Integration and Social Cohesion

Social cohesion, integration and reintegration processes are key areas of the migration–development nexus (e.g. Hong & Knoll 2016; Nyberg-Sørensen et al. 2003). In particular, they are key themes of SDG 16 and areas of the Global Compacts where faith actors' roles are explicitly acknowledged (UNHCR 2018; IOM 2018). LFAs are important actors in these processes in many contexts, both on their own and in partnership with other secular or faith actors. For instance, the work of La 72 with local communities, national and local authorities and newcomers highlighted in the previous section focuses not only on the rights of LGBTI migrants, but also on addressing tensions between different groups and ways to open up spaces of dialogue between them (Olayo-Méndez 2017). In Sweden, the "Good Neighbours" project – a collaboration between the Stockholm Mosque, the Katarina parish, Islamic Relief, the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Negashi Mosque – constitutes a very interesting example of how a multi-religious initiative can provide support to integration processes through complementary social, cultural and linguistic assets and contribute to creating bridges among communities (Lyck-Bowen & Owen 2018).

Fostering local integration of displaced communities often means facilitating their access to services like birth and marriage registration, healthcare and schooling, as well as to the job market. For instance, in Turkey, the Vaiz of Bursa contributed to the integration of Syrian refugees by mobilising the local faith community on the basis of religious and ethical values of empathy and assistance towards refugees (Jacoby et al. 2018). Nicholson (2018) described the roles of faith-based actors in supporting migrants' entrepreneurship and access to healthcare in the US. For example, LFAs often mobilise to provide health-related information and services to migrant communities through their networks, which often include volunteering doctors and caregivers (Nicholson 2018). These activities are particularly significant when they target individuals and/or groups who would otherwise not be able to access these services, e.g. undocumented migrants (ibid).

As regards migrants' entrepreneurship, Jewish Vocational Services and Lutheran Social Services for instance partnered to offer loans and training to refugees who had resettled in Boston, Massachusetts (ibid). In Bogotá, there is evidence that small Pentecostal congregations, and their religious leaders in

particular, offered paths for resocialisation to internally displaced Colombians (*desplazados*) who had lost their own networks as a result of forced displacement (Borda Carulla 2007). While these paths lead to increased work opportunities and less isolation, they also deserve careful scrutiny, as they are in this case often linked to conversion, proselytisation and the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches (Borda Carulla 2007: 45). On the other hand, Amores, a local interfaith forum based in Zamboanga, the Philippines, addressed employment discrimination and tensions between religious groups by developing a business where Christians and Muslims would work side by side to show how peaceful coexistence at the workplace is possible and does not necessarily lead to one group attempting to convert the other one (Kraft 2020: 230).

A study on building social cohesion between Syrian refugees and host communities in cities in Lebanon and Jordan called for more in-depth analysis of the impact of faith-based actors on tensions between established communities and those experiencing protracted displacement (World Vision 2017: 30). Trotta & Wilkinson (2019) illustrated the complexity of LFAs' engagements with peacebuilding and social cohesion. Through a background review and the analysis of four case studies, they highlighted the importance of engaging not only high-level religious leaders but also local-level leaders (including female and youth leaders), according to the context and the strategy used to address peacebuilding issues. Moreover, the study showed how LFAs often use media to counter hate speech and xenophobic narratives, and pointed out that a combination of online and offline activities can be key to engaging all communities, including marginalised minorities who might more easily access one or the other platform.

The work on social cohesion is often key to addressing issues related to reintegration after return as well as root causes of migration. For instance, Mercy Corps has worked since 2014 in Northern Nigeria to counter extremism, including discouraging youth from joining Boko Haram through radio programmes, working with leaders from different faith communities (VOICE 2019). In the same region, the Allamin Foundation has worked with Muslim scholars to develop religious messages of acceptance and empathy towards girls returning after abduction by extremist groups. However, studies have also revealed that engaging religious leaders to work with returnees from conflict and extremist groups can be counterproductive due to the instrumentalisation of religion that violent extremist groups present (UNDP & ICAN 2019). In fact, explicitly addressing religious issues in contexts where they are charged with high political tensions or even used to justify conflict can be counterproductive, while shifting the focus to other issues that affect local communities of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds alike have proved to be more effective (Trotta & Wilkinson 2019: 52). On the other hand, different examples indicate that peacebuilding efforts that ignore the religious dimension of social tensions and fail to engage LFAs can also fail to reach their goals. This is true, for example, in the context of reconciliation in post-war Sri Lanka, between predominantly Muslim communities who had experienced displacement during the war and returned to the northern cities of Jaffna and predominantly Tamil communities who stayed in the city. In this case, Duncan and Cardoso argued that informal peacebuilding activities conducted by local organisations and directly addressing interreligious dialogue were more effective than formal peacebuilding education carried out in schools (Duncan & Cardoso 2017). This shows the importance of critically considering LFAs' engagements in building social cohesion and reconciliation in post-conflict and post-displacement contexts.

Conclusion

This literature review has provided some insights on the roles of LFAs at the crossroads between migration and development. It has focused on key aspects of the migration–development nexus in which LFAs' engagements have been extensively documented, i.e. the integration of development and

migration policies, localisation, remittances and economic development, the gender dimension of migration and development, long-term solutions to displacement (i.e. resettlement, return and (re)integration) and social cohesion. Overall, this paper has made the point that LFAs' roles can be crucial to working towards the Sustainable Development Goals and towards building better and more coherent migration and development policies for the post-2030 Agenda. Furthermore, these examples have clearly demonstrated that looking at LFAs' initiatives provides material for a more nuanced understanding of migration and development and of the many ways in which the two phenomena are interlinked.

At the same time, this review has also found that there are several gaps in the existing literature on LFAs' engagements with the migration–development nexus. For instance, as regards the protection of children on the move, there clearly is scope for further investigations on the roles of LFAs in facilitating the provision of services like birth registration, family reunion, education etc. in transit or arrival countries. There is also a gap in research about LFAs' contributions to guaranteeing migrants' rights, such as healthcare, access to work and dignified work conditions, both through the implementation of specific programmes as well as through policy and advocacy campaigns. Although LFAs are also increasingly engaged in climate-change-related initiatives, there is currently a lack of studies looking at how these engagements relate to climate-change-driven migration.

As several examples included in this paper highlighted, in order to better understand the roles LFAs play in these realms, it is important to avoid generalisations and essentialisations regarding faith actors – including that they are more conservative than secular actors and that local faith actors automatically represent local communities' interests and needs. Equally, it is necessary to consider that LFAs, like all other actors, are not exempt from politicisation, and that they can be engaged in an instrumental way by other actors who seek to pursue their own agenda.

Looking ahead, these key points should be taken into consideration by policymakers when planning and carrying out partnerships and consultation processes with LFAs. In particular, there is a need to contextualise LFAs' contributions and to enhance their visibility and participation through research and sustained, open dialogue.

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