

Summary of presentation by Professor Saburo Takizawa of Toyo Eiwa University at the
Peace Building Seminar in Baghdad on 18 February 2019

1. What are the problems?

IDPs (40M globally, 1.8M in Iraq) are suffering as much as refugees. Many have moved several times in their country and are in limbo. They are “ground zero” for refugee crisis. They may be enticed by extremist groups and undermine peace building, or they may become refugees.

Refugees (25.4M globally, 270,000 in Iraq) left their home country because they see no durable solutions. 52% are children, 50% are girls/women and 85% are in developing countries. When the number is large, they become burdens on the host country. Since 2015 million have moved to Europe, creating a global refugee crisis.

2. What are the causes?

Some States are fragile and unable to control internal armed conflicts, and this causes flight of millions of IDPs, some of which cross borders to become “conflict refugees”. Some authoritarian States persecute their citizens, some of whom seek asylum abroad and become refugees. Protection of refugees have become complicated by millions of desperate “survival migrants” who cross borders together with refugees.

3. What are the International Responses?

Based on the notion of Responsibilities to Protect, the international society attempts to protect IDPs through the “Cluster Approach”.

Refugees are protected by the Global Refugee Regime, consisting of the 1951 Refugee convention, Member States, UNHCR and local/international NGOs. Three “solutions” to refugee problems are voluntary repatriation, local integration and 3rd country resettlement. However, repatriation and Peace Building is a challenge. Country of origin may not have /allocate enough resources for reintegrating returning refugees.

4. Are the Global Refugee Regime (GRR) effective?

The GRR is not necessarily effective because (a) the definition of refugees in the 1951 Refugee Convention is too narrow and excluded “war / conflict refugees”, (b) the Territorial Asylum principles exclude those who cannot reach destination countries, (c) rich states are not sharing, but shifting the responsibilities and burdens of protecting refugees.

Real “solutions” available for refugees are (a) stay in refugee camps indefinitely, (b) live in urban slums, or (c) undertake hazardous travel to developed countries with the help of smugglers.

5. In search for a new approach

The UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration in 2016 and the Global Compact

on Refugees (GCR) in 2018. The latter aims to (a) reduce burdens of host countries, (b) promote self-reliance of refugees and reduce dependencies), expand 3rd Country Resettlement and other legal pathways, and (c) improve conditions of the country of origin to facilitate return and reintegration.

The GCR is a welcome development to strengthen the Global Refugee Regime (GRR). However, to overcome the limitation of the GRR as mentioned under 4 above, a new approach is needed.

At present, huge sum of money is spent for protecting refugees who arrived in the Global North, but not enough money is spent for refugees/IDPs in the Global South. The new approach should balance humanitarian principles advocated by UNHCR and “interests” of host communities and States.

The new approach should (a) move the focus from asylum in the developed countries to protection in neighboring countries, as well as assisting IDPs, (b) go beyond persecution-based asylum system towards economy-oriented protection system, (c) utilize the potentials of refugees/IDPs by providing work opportunities (e. g., Jordan Compact), (d) rather than spending billions of dollars to help refugees who reached Europe, spend (part of) that in neighboring host countries so that refugees do not need to risk lives to cross the ocean and also to reduce burdens on the hosting countries. Solutions in the region makes economic, social and political senses.

6. Japan’ s assistance to Iraq

Japan’ s ODA principles include Human Security and Peace Building. Japanese assistance to Iraq and refugees/IDPs includes (a) humanitarian aid for IDPs, Syrian refugees (USD361M), both bilaterally and multilaterally, (b) support to Iraq (USD15 billions) for emergency humanitarian aid, consolidation of peace, reconstruction and development, as well as financial support.

Japanese official money helps millions of Iraqi IDPs and refugees, and is in line with the new approach as mentioned 5 above. In addition, Japanese citizens (NGOs and Japan for UNHCR) also run campaigns for Iraqi IDPs and refugees.

7. Conclusions

Post-conflict Peace (State) Building is a daring task. In the absence of peace and stability in countries of origin, refugees/IDP crises will recur. Reestablishing democratic governance and economic growth is crucial. Political leaders are responsible for the task, with international assistance. Japan remains steadfast in supporting Iraqi people.