Long Session Report

Session Title: Corruption and Migration: Connecting the Flows of Money and Refugees
Date & Time: December 1, 2016
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Session coordinated by: Jessica Schultz, U4 and Jan Duck, GIZ

Moderated by: Arne Strand, U4

Experts:

Klaus Tanzberger, Desk Officer, BMZ
Leanne Govindsamy, Head of Legal Investigations, Corruption Watch South Africa
Peter Tinti, Researcher and Journalist, Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime
Erlend Paasche, Post Doctoral Researcher, University of Oslo

What were the aims of the session and corruption risks?

This session was designed to highlight the way corruption impacts migration decisions and experience along four nodes of the migration cycle: the decision to leave one’s country, the journey through transit countries, the process of regularizing status in a third country and experience of return and reintegration.
Summary of panellists’ contributions & discussion points
(please be as detailed as possible)

Klaus Tanzberger from BMZ opened the panel by asking whether corruption is an underestimated driver of migration. In response to the recent influx of refugees to Germany as well as global migration movements, the government’s prioritization has focused on creating safe spaces and employment opportunities in host countries, and support to countries hosting irregular migrants and displaced persons. This has led to the question: how can development cooperation better address structural causes of conflict and irregular migration? What role does corruption play in pushing people to migrate?

A study by UNE-MERIT at Maastricht University has been commissioned to gain better insights into the link. Its main objectives are to gain a systematic overview of corruption as a potential driver for migration, and test the model developed in Mail and Ukraine. In this study-in-progress, the authors are exploring the way in which corruption relates to different components of human security – economic security, political security, health security, community security, environmental security, food security, and not least personal security.

Peter Tinti, a journalist and researcher with the Global Initiative against Organized Crime shared findings from his research on human smuggling about the role that corruption plays in the business models of smuggling networks. He emphasized the need to understand the political economies within which migrant smuggling networks operate in order to develop appropriate policy responses. Because migrant smuggling networks are often deeply enmeshed within local security structures, poorly designed interventions can make the situation worse and even destabilize the area by upsetting local balances of power. In Niger, for example, one traditional transit hub has been cornered by a minority tribe with members also in Chad and S. Libya. The army, which is present within N. Niger, collects rents from each convoy that passes, which it depends upon to sustain its policing capacity. To ask Niger to crack down on this hub is to ask them to eliminate the
livelihoods of a marginalized community, as well as those of young armed men. What is the price of stopping corruption in these flows? Instability? More refugees? Unless demand is reduced, control policies simply create more opportunities for corruption.

Leanne Govindsamy, Head of Legal Investigations at Corruption Watch South Africa presented Project Lokisa, which enables migrant whistleblowers in South Africa to report corruption.

The context: in S. Africa, asylum seekers are often asked for, or offer, bribes in exchange for refugee status documents. There are over a million unprocessed claims for asylum in the country. Bribery in this context goes largely unchecked due to an absence of disciplinary or criminal sanctions. As a consequence, some of those without protection needs gain status while others with a valid claim are not recognized. Corruption impacts not only the outcome of status determination, but all of the rights linked to legal status: school for kids, housing security – basically any engagement with the state. Asylum seekers are, of course, particularly vulnerable as whistleblowers because they have so much to lose. The project, therefore, aims to provide a secure channel through which information about bribery requests and exchanges can be documented.

The project report:

The project video:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5DOyGMnKws_aUtOS1piQmFxNnM/view?usp=sharing

This presentation highlighted the need to understand the legislative and policy space which one has to address corruption. Little cooperation from the Department of Home Affairs so far – or interest in disciplinary sanctions – but Corruption Watch is using the report to raise public awareness and continue its efforts to engage with the government, including through draft policies and laws. Criminal investigations have been opened against two officials and one interpreter.

Erlend Paasche, Postdoctoral researcher, University of Oslo Paasche's presentation was based in part on insights from his doctoral research and in part on his consultancy work on return programmes for
rejected asylum seekers. He outlined three reasons why experts and practitioners in the field of corruption should take an interest in displacement and corruption: the sheer magnitude of migration; the potential developmental impact of migration; and the way migration from high-corruption areas is patterned. Why should corruption experts and practitioners care about migration?

One understudied question is the effect of migration on corruption – in receiving, sending and transit countries. Migrants may be persons committed to fighting corruption, agents of corruption themselves, or persons whose attitudes towards corruption change during the process of migration. The first and third scenarios have the implication that migrants can be partners in the work against corruption. The diaspora are an underexploited resource for anti-corruption efforts – here are stakeholders with local knowledge, a vested interest in the country of origin, networks, etc.

Main outcomes of session (include the highlights and interesting questions from the floor)
The sessions all highlighted the need to ground the discussion of corruption and migration in more concrete particulars – otherwise there is a tendency to over-generalize and perhaps overemphasize the role that corruption plays in various development outcomes.

Another factor here is the role of aid agencies and development partners in the way attitudes towards corruption are transferred.

Key recommendations and concrete follow-up actions

With the enhanced interest of policy makers in this field, it is important to address potential negative impacts within anti-corruption measures on the security of migrants and also on regional security.

Equally important, cooperation agreements with third countries regarding migration should ensure that persons facilitating migration
through lower level corruption have meaningful options, and that anti-smuggling and trafficking policies do not drive migrants and profits into the hands of more exploitative and corrupt organized criminal networks.

At the same time, more work needs to be done to understand the role that corruption plays in the decision to migrate and return, and on the role of the migrant as an actor of corruption or anti-corruption.

We value your assessment following the outputs of the session, if you need to, please get feedback from the session coordinator or the moderator for this component.

What can be done to create opportunities for scaling up the solutions discussed in the session? And by whom?

This is an area where more research is needed to understand the dynamics of individual contexts.
Key Insights for the future of the anti-corruption agenda (including Game Changing ideas/ suggestions/ actions from the session)

Rapporteur’s name and date submitted
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Remember! This Long Report needs to be emailed to reports@17iacc.org by 15th December. Thanks!