Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT
Event

"Humanitarian Innovation in Action"

Panel 4: Humanitarian Innovation in Responses to Displacement

DATE
Tuesday, July 19, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. ET

FEATURING
Meghan Benton
Director of the International Program, Migration Policy Institute

Ugochi Daniels
Deputy Director General for Operations, International Organization for Migration

Edwin Kuria
Director of Programs-Ethiopia, Mercy Corps

CSIS EXPERTS
Erol Yayboke
Director and Senior Fellow, Project on Fragility and Mobility, CSIS

Transcript By
Superior Transcriptions LLC
www.superiortranscriptions.com

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Erol Yayboke: Hello, everyone. And welcome back to the Humanitarian Innovation and Action Conference here at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I am not your responsible safety officer. (Laughter.) That is someone else, who hopefully should have talked to you earlier in the day. Are you the responsibility safety officer, Jake? Jake is the responsible safety officer.

I'm really honored to be moderating this panel on Humanitarian Innovation in Responses to Displacement. And we've got three really amazing panelists from all over the world joining us today with really unique approaches and unique experiences in this space. This specific panel is, I hope – no pressure, panelists – going to consider new ways of thinking about displacement situations that challenge how we think about these situations.

I mean, I feel like a lot of what we've heard today and talked about today is just trying to rethink how we deliver assistance to people who need it. And I'm hard-pressed to think about people who need it more than those in displacement scenarios. And as we know, there are more and more of these displacement scenarios all around the world, happening more frequently and lasting longer. And so anything we can do, any good ideas from the – from the panelists, I'm sure will be well-received.

I will mention now, and I'll mention it at the end, that this panel – even though I know you came to see me sit on a stage here by myself – this panel will be followed by a panel with David Miliband and Dr. Abdirizak Yusuf Ahmed at 20 after 4:00 p.m. here on the East Coast in the United States.

So I'm going to turn quickly to our panelists. And I'm just going to go one by one, panelists, and ask you to ask a broad – answer a broad question before we get into the discussion. So I'm going to start with the deputy director general for operations of the International Organization for Migration, the U.N. migration agency, Ugochi Daniels, who is, I believe, joining us from Geneva. So, Ugochi, how are you? Good to see you.

Ugochi Daniels: I'm good, Erol. It's really great to be here. Thank you for having me. And somehow we're managing to stay cool – (laughter) – in what's a really hot time for Europe.

Mr. Yayboke: I, myself, just came back from Europe yesterday and can attest to the fact that it is – you know, there's lots of places in Europe that don't have air conditioning. And they may have to be rethinking that shortly. But, Ugochi, thanks again for joining us. And I'd love to hear your initial thoughts about how you think about innovation in displacement scenarios. And I know that this is not something that is an abstract idea for you. You've got a really incredible personal story as well. So the degree to which you're comfortable sharing with our audience a little bit about how your own personal

experience have sort of formulated your interest in this topic of innovation, we'd certainly welcome that. But I'll turn it over to you. Thanks, again, for being here, Ugochi.

Ms. Daniels: Thank you, Erol. And good morning, good afternoon to the participants in the room, my panelists – and my fellow panelists, as well as everyone else online.

So, indeed, Erol, it is deeply personal for me because at a certain time in my life – I was much younger, it was during the Nigerian civil war. And my father had to take his family – I was a baby – and leave in the middle of the night. So forced displacement is something that is deeply personal for me. It's something I've dedicated over 20 years of my professional life to. And in terms of the way it has shaped me and informed by role in – my current role at IOM, you know, is just to think of the fact that at one time in my life I was forcibly displaced. And at another time in my life, fast-forward many, many years later, I'm the deputy director general for operations at IOM.

And what made that different? It's a difference of opportunity. It's a difference of options. And so when we begin to talk about innovation in humanitarian settings – and, yes, we're going to speak about examples. And a lot of that is technological or technical in nature. But what we really do need to understand, that it's about people. And that what I have seen and experienced – not just experienced myself, but with people who have been or continue to be displaced from their homes, are highly resilient and want the same thing, like we do.

And therefore, when we talk about innovation and when we get, you know, into the weeds of it a bit, what we really need to keep in mind is that at the end of the day they want to – they want the same things we do. They want the same things for their families. They have the same aspirations for their children. They want to be productive. They don't want to be dependent on assistance. And they want to have the opportunity to have control over their lives, their futures, and be a productive member of their – of their societies, of their communities.

So I do think it's really, really important that as we talk about displacement, as we talk about giving assistance, as we talk about how we innovate, that we realize that it's about people and that the way we support them means that anybody who is in a vulnerable situation due to displacement today can be anybody else in their – in their future can be anybody else. And the way that we engage with them, with their communities, is a key determinant – can be a key determinant of that if we do it well.

Maybe I'll hand – I'll hand that back to you, Erol.

Mr. Yayboke: Thanks. Thanks, Ugochi. And thanks for setting the stage and grounding us in that. When we were thinking about this panel it's really easy to think about innovation in the silver bullet context. You know, what's that – what's that technology, what's that app that's going to make life better for refugees and internally displaced persons and asylum seekers?

And Ugochi, I couldn't agree more. You know, a lot of this is just figuring out how to deliver better solutions for people who just want to be normal, who just want to be – have their kids in school and go about their work and make a living. And that might be an app. That might be some sort of technology. And that might not be. It just may be a process innovation or some sort of thinking more efficiently and effectively about how we deliver services. So thank you for that, Ugochi.

And speaking of innovating in project design and project implementation, Edwin, if I could turn to you. So Edwin Kuria is the director of programs for Mercy Corps in Ethiopia. And he's got a lot of experience working in the region. He and I have both worked on refugee issues as they relate to South Sudanese people. He's worked in Rwanda and Uganda. And they're doing some pretty interesting stuff in Ethiopia. So, Edwin, a similar question to you. When you think about innovation in these displacement, humanitarian situations, what do you think about? And what are – what are you guys doing in Ethiopia that is innovative?

Edwin Kuria: Thank you so much, Erol. Good morning, all greetings from Ethiopia. It's a bit later in the night, but we're pushing through.

I think for me, innovation is doing things better the next time we do it. And then, that means it's beyond technology. And it's finding the most effective and efficient manner of finding solutions that are durable, speaks to the local context, and they're local enough to be sustainable. Looking at our context in Ethiopia, where the crisis drivers remain climate – climate-driven crisis of cyclic droughts and floods – and conflict. And when you talk of the conflicts, we're looking at figures upwards of 20 million-plus, indeed, of humanitarian assistance in 2022 only. And with an evolving conflict situation and expanding droughts crisis – you can imagine how those figures will look like in 2023.

So chalk that up with COVID, malaria, measles, and malnutrition, which, again, affects disproportionately the displaced communities, means that you need to be able to have adaptive programs at the design level. So for Mercy Corps in Ethiopia, we've been here from 2004, working in resilience programs, youth programs, financial inclusion, a lot of durable solution programs for our refugee spaces and humanitarian interventions in the sectors of WASH, health, agricultural, multipurpose cash assistance, and livelihoods.

So we – you look at the population of concern and you can categorize our contexts into four.

One, we have internally displaced persons who we are intervening with WASH, non-food items, looking at mobile health clinics and protection programs. And we are designing those ones with the private sector. So we are able to do private-sector interventions even for water tracking, running with voucher programs to ensure that we're sharpening the level of targeting based on the needs.

Then you have a category of returnees. And for returnees, we are intervening in multipurpose cash assistance. This is for households that have lost everything during their displacement, and whether they were forced returns or voluntary returns. So for households that have lost everything, we are providing multipurpose cash assistance. For households with productive assets, we are providing agricultural interventions – either seeds or tools or feed fodder – to make sure that they can sustain their core breeding stock, which is probably one lactating animal and seven shods for goods, to ensure that their productive livelihoods cycle continues.

Then you have the drought affected displaced, especially for the pastoral communities. And these, we are working through some natural resource management activities, building canals, redirecting the water, providing enclosures, regenerating pastures, and improved seeds, and providing some agricultural inputs in anticipation of the rains in October. The final subject will be the refugees, where we are doing a lot of durable solution programs, looking at a graduation model from poverty, overlaying that with a market systems development approach, through a project that we call Dreams, which is delivering resilient enterprise and market reference for refugees.

So to make sure that we have sustainable microenterprises at household levels, especially for refugees who will see upwards of 10 years of displacement. IDP cycles are longer now. We are talking of five years to 10 years, especially if they are election related. So until the next election cycle, but their displacement remains. I want to close there and hand it over back to you, Erol. Thank you.

Mr. Yayboke: Thanks, Edwin. And there's a lot there. And one of the things that I particularly liked about what you said was innovation is, in part, about tailoring. And this is not a one-size-fits-all situation. These are not one-size-fits-all situations. And I think that part of what we need to be thinking about is that sort of bespoke, tailored – of course, there's all sorts of reasons why that's difficult. But I'm excited to hear about that level of tailoring and specification that you're delivering in Ethiopia.

I'd like to turn to Dr. Meghan Benton. Meghan is the director of the International Program at the Migration Policy Institute here in Washington, D.C. She had done a lot of really great work at the Migration Policy Institute and beyond. And one thing that I'm particularly taken with in her background is this – she co-founded a few years ago NPI's Europe Integration Futures working group, which if she'll indulge us maybe she'll talk a little bit about. But I think, you know, Meghan, you think about innovation not just in the technological sense, but in sort of social innovation and other ways. And so I would welcome your thoughts on this general idea of what innovation looks like in displacement contexts. Thanks again for being here, Meghan.

Meghan Benton: Thanks, Erol. And thanks so much for reading my bio closely and pulling out that initiative, which is really close to my heart, and I can talk about in a minute. But I first wanted to start a little bit by describing kind of how I responded to the abstract for this exciting meeting and some of the provocative questions that you asked. You know, I was thinking about what does "innovation in displacement" mean? And like a good recovering academic, I started jotting down a list.

So there are so many innovations in the displacement space – whether it's one-stop shops that deliver access to documentation in services, or cash transfer programs, and digital wallets; and financial inclusion interventions that accept refugee documents instead of government IDs; remote interviews in asylum processing, a really big thing that's come out in the pandemic; private sponsorship programs to allow groups and individuals to sponsor refugees and help them settle in. And, you know, Erol, you alluded to the fact that I've been working and sort of mapping and tracking social and technological innovation in these fields for a while now.

But, you know, I was thinking about it. And I have to confess, I've become a little bit allergic to the word "innovation," which I think it's because it's had a sort of almost promiscuous use lately, and that almost anything can be described as innovative, depending on, you know, what your particular lens is. So personally, I started to prefer more specific terms, whether it's unusual collaborations and partnerships, or funding models that promote evidence-based practice, or creative problem solving, or scaling up work for collective intelligence.

And then I think the other challenge is – you know, are the speakers. And Erol has alluded to, is that I think the word "innovation" slightly encourages us to focus on the shiny stuff, whether it's new or experimental, even that means quite small-scale programs or interventions. And I think as a result, sometimes we end up kind of focusing on, well, do we have a pretty watering can, but actually we need to be focusing on is there a robust water supply and some of the kind of big-picture questions. So I think if we turn the

question around, we should be asking things like, well, where is innovation lacking and where do we still lack solutions to big policy challenges? And where have we tested things at a small scale that have barriers to scale up that are proving protracted?

The Economist ran a feature on innovation a few years ago. And they basically said, yeah, the smartphone is great and all, but have we really had anything as groundbreaking as the toilet? And I think – (laughs) – sometimes it's useful to bear the image of the toilet in mind when we're talking about innovation, because it brings to mind the need for scale, the need for outcomes. But it also reminds us that innovation doesn't always come with bells and whistles. It can often appear really quite prosaic.

The other thing to mention, you – presumably, many of you have seen the sort of – the innovation spiral that's often sort of depicted in the literature. Which is this idea that you can start with exploring opportunities and challenges and kind of generating ideas, and you're testing. And it has to be all the way up to scaling or whole systems change. And I think if we're asking about scale, one of the big innovations of the past few years is, arguably, in our policy innovation, it's the expansion of private sponsorship programs in response to Afghan and Ukrainian displacement.

You know, Canada's obviously had this well-established private sponsorship program, but other countries have only dipped their toes in this until recently. But now you have quite big numbers. You know, the U.K. is settling 60,000 refugees through its homes for Ukrainians program. The U.S. has gone this quite impressive matching portal. It's really been – it's really focused in the mind on some of these – some of these responses.

And then I think some of the pragmatic regularization programs in Latin America in response to the Venezuela crisis and the temporary protection directive in Europe are also pretty groundbreaking responses to mass displacement, because they bypass asylum systems, they ensure that people don't end up in irregular status, that they can access labor markets, that you treat integration as a day one affair, that you see displaced populations as a source of labor, which is especially vital when we have these tight labor markets.

But I think, perhaps most importantly, they also give a sense of individual agency in the sense that we acknowledge that refugees have a choice on where to go, and how and when. It's interesting in the EU that the conversation around secondary mobility of refugees has pretty much disappeared, and kind of allowing refugees to move where they want. And it hasn't been the end of the world, even though this has been a real concern in the EU policy space for a while. You know, it really allows people to be seen as people rather than through the lens of their vulnerability. So this is just a

little pitch for thinking about policy innovation as much as programmatic innovation, and focusing on whole systems rather than just the sort of small-scale stuff.

Mr. Yayboke: Yeah. And I think when we think about displacement scenarios, a lot of times we're thinking about status, and making sure that people have regular status where, whatever their situation is – and some of that can get really legalistic. Some of it can get really complicated. And I think, you know, whether it's using technology, or social innovation, or some other ways of thinking about that, I think innovation can address some of those – it can clarify some of those issues for some of those people.

I also love my job because I get to talk to people who use terms like provocative, promiscuous, and prosaic when talking about humanitarian innovation in displacement contexts. So, Meghan, let's grab coffee when you're feeling better. That's amazing. Ugochi, if I can come back to you for a second. We've talked about different types of innovation here, and we've – obviously, we're only touching the surface. If I could focus for a second on actual technological innovation with you. And things like – when you think about things like data analytics and geospatial data and satellite imagery, how do you think about that in terms of predicting and therefore being able to respond better to future displacement crises?

Sorry, I think we – unmute, yeah.

Ms. Daniels: I mean, it's such a bummer. Almost three years in and I'm still unable to mute and unmute when I'm supposed to. (Laughs.)

Mr. Yayboke: It's OK. I'm sitting on stage by myself, so it's fine. (Laughter.)

Ms. Daniels: (Laughs.) Great question. I'll get to it. I just wanted to pick up on one of the points Meghan made when she was speaking about the temporary protection directive in Europe in response to the – to the war in Ukraine. And I just want to remind – well, maybe not remind everybody. I know this because I work at IOM. And the director general at IOM, in his previous life when he was in the EU Commission, actually put in place the temporary protection directive for a situation exactly like what we have now. But that's well over 10 years ago.

And so, you know, when we're talking about innovation, it really drives us to look at opportunities to better anticipate, respond, and prevent displacement. And that's exactly what that temporary protection directive did, in that it was anticipating the need for a policy – well, basically for a migratory tool to deal with mass displacement in Europe. So I think it's a – it's a really strong example of the different aspects of innovation and, as Edwin said, about us doing – you know, doing things differently, doing things

better, being able to better anticipate and respond. And also, as much as possible, to prevent displacement, with a focus on building resilience.

But you had specifically asked me about, you know, data analytics, geospatial data, and predicting and responding. And what we obviously recognize as the role of new technology and data in humanitarian settings, and specifically in responding to the needs of those displaced. And we can't underestimate the role of new technology. But as I'm saying this, the picture of the toilet is firmly in – (laughs) – in my mind. And maybe that's the – you know, that's the litmus test for is. Is it going to – is the outcome of this going to be as groundbreaking and as impactful as the toilet has been? So let's go for it.

So what we have seen is that innovation in the field of data has enabled development of various tools that help inform strategic planning. Again, anticipating, responding, and preventing future displacement. But when it comes to data, what we see is that there's been progress, but a lot more needs to be done for it to be more robust. And granular data is needed so we can – so that we're better able to detect the drivers and root causes of conflict migration patterns. So from IOM's perspective, data and evidence have driven – and that's deeply ingrained in our culture, as part of our DNA.

And finding solutions to complex challenges requires innovation guided by experience. And what we have seen is that tools such as our work in Mozambique and 10 other countries on our Solutions and Mobility Index really highlight the immense opportunities of existing data structure and tools. And this index is a consolidation of innovative and solutions-oriented tools developed at the country level. So here, we're getting at the issue of local – of localization, of context-specific, defined from the perspective of the communities that we're engaging with in collecting – in collecting this data, so that the solutions themselves are nuanced, are granular, and work across the various settings, and enable the transition to solutions.

In West Africa, we've also seen with our Transhumance Tracking Tool – and this is in partnership with local, national, and civil society, so whole of government, whole of society approaches. And also, the roll of partnerships in innovation to provide information about mobility trends and patterns. In Haiti, we've established early warning systems in areas affected by gang violence using displacement data. And the early warning system is implemented at the cartier level and actually helps in identifying new displacement and understanding better the perception – the local perceptions of security.

And, you know, I had spoken earlier about, you know, partnerships. And obviously partnerships and engaging the communities themselves is so, so critically important because at the end of the day, and with all of our best

frameworks and standards for how we define an innovation, we can only really say it's an innovation if those who are displaced see it for themselves as something that has contributed to a solution to their – to their – to their displacement. So we certainly, from IOM, also recognize that in this space we are dealing with people that are in highly vulnerable situations. And this, of course, affects their own vulnerability.

And we also have to weigh what the risks are with the technology and the tools that we use. We're very concerned about this. And so we co-created with the Yale School of Public Health the Data Science and Ethics Group, which is a data responsibility initiative focused on the best ethical, technical, and contextual data responsibility practices in these areas of concern. So we're all onboard for predictive analytics, but let's also be aware that there is – there is a – there are risks. And that ultimately, it's about not doing harm in how we use predictive analytics for future mobility. And we all have a responsibility to mitigate this with data protection.

So I just want to highlight the power of technology, how we are using the data, and these different really contextualized tools for local solutions. But also balancing that with do no harm, ensuring data protection, and ultimately putting – I mean, I know it's a bit of a – what's the word – it's a bit cliché in terms of putting people at the center. You know, nothing for them without them. But again, going back to my own personal story and what all our aspirations are for those we seek to assist in displaced settings, it's critically important that we continue to ensure that what we're – what we're working on, how we're working, and how we innovate does no harm and enables a solution that they would also define – that they would also define as a solution to their displacement.

Back to you, Erol.

Mr. Yayboke: Thanks, Ugochi. And thanks for bringing up the risks as well. A few colleagues and I recently published a short piece on Ukrainian refugees, and how they're really not just tech savviness and everybody has a smartphone. Most displaced people have smartphones in the world these days. But there's also ubiquitous connectivity that is coupled with sort of tech savviness. And that that's a double edge – there's a double edge to that technology availability. And so thanks for bringing up the risks.

I want to come back to the risks in a little bit but, Edwin, can I ask you a similar question about the tech innovation side of this? I mean, you talked about thinking differently about how we program and do work in places like Ethiopia and different humanitarian displacement contexts. How are you using data and analytics and sort of technology more broadly in implementing that? And are you thinking about this sort of risk factor at all?

Mr. Kuria: Thank you. And just picking up from where Ugochi left it at, I think in Mercy Corps we are looking at data points for these issues. We're looking at data points to enable us to make critical decisions as we design our programs. And an example, for Ethiopia, where we have seen a lot of climate-related crisis, and climate-related displacements. It means that we – it's critical that we openly – the satellite imagery, the geospatial data, the meteorological information, to be able to predict where the communities will move to. Linked to pasture regeneration and verifying that information from the triangulation of the several data points that overlay in that process.

We're also using the same data points to map our available resources in terms of where are the water sources going to be for the displaced populations, where are the energy sources? Because remember, for every displaced community there is a host community. So we're using the data points to build social cohesion processes in peacebuilding aspects to make sure that the humanitarian data, the peace data, and the development data is speaking to each other, so that we can do prioritization of the funding investments that needs to go in and to ensure that the host communities are not, again, becoming more affected by just taking in the displaced communities.

A perfect example is we are designing a short social protection intervention with climate data points as the entry point. So looking at communities that will be affected by flooding, and injection some social protection cash transfers on the early part of – based on meteorological data, to make sure that the communities are able to prepare for, move to higher ground, adapt their livelihoods. And we've seen some results in terms of the resilience that is built in that process.

I think now we are trying to build capabilities and invest in social and behavior change communication processes, because we need to build trust between data, analytics, and the communities that are supposed to absorb and consume the same data, whether you're dealing with looking at it from regional governments or federal governments. And especially in the meteorological data, we've seen a lot of mistrust and disconnect between listening and believing all the weathermen is putting out there, and the anticipatory action, and the early action activities that need to happen at the community level. Thank you, Erol, and back to you.

Mr. Yayboke: I'm so glad that you brought up trust, because I feel like in innovation more broadly, but especially in technological innovation, the innovations are only as good as people's willingness to take them up. And, you know, there's lots of mistrust, I think fairly well-placed mistrust, about technologies these days. And, you know, my own personal experience with displaced folks in the field is that they're pretty savvy about that. And so we need to not just be thinking about what those technological innovations are, but how do we get people to

trust them? And how do we make sure, most importantly, that they are trustworthy?

Meghan, similar question to you about the technology side of this. I mean, in your work do you think about how data analytics, or geospatially, or any other types of technological innovations are helping respond to or predict what we can do to help out in displacement scenarios? And, you know, if you have any thoughts about this sort of trust or sort of potential negative downside of this, I'd welcome that as well.

Dr. Benton: Thanks, Erol. I get very excited about predictive analytics. But I just want to maybe continue on the theme that I tried to open up with in my first intervention, which is about the kind of more prosaic side of innovation. You know, a colleague of mine just came back from Uganda, and he was talking about how poor data becomes a problem. So because most of the refugee population is urban, the data that's available for program responses and planning is just really, really poor.

And so city governments who are responsible for service provision, and education, and health, and waste management, are just really unable to properly plan. And then they have real trouble just getting kind of base – getting into the sort of accurate, basic funding calculations in terms of how funding trickles down from the central government. So there's often, you know, really basic data gaps that I think the data can fill that are not necessarily to do with prediction, and forecasting, and analytics, but are just to do with, you know, actually providing real-time, up to the minute data, filling gaps in statistics, helping understand that, you know, there's a lag in the way that budgets are being allocated and set.

That said, you know, I do think there's huge potential in prediction, and forecasting, and now-casting. You know, we've been looking at things like how social media data and cellphone data is used to provide updates of fast-evolving displacement crises. There's Facebook's displacement maps, the estimate where someone displaced by a crisis might be as a result of if their night location has changed. You have the European asylum system that's looking at early warning and forecasting systems with a number of asylum seekers based on event data, and Google search, and operational data.

So lots to be excited about. But the point I wanted to make is that I'm – that they're all quite disparate, these innovations. And they haven't necessarily been sort of joined up or broken through to the mainstream and connected with the donor programmatic response. Which is why I think one of the things that is quite exciting when it comes to disaster response and climate – I know Edwin mentioned climate – is the IFRC's forecast-based action disaster emergency response. Because it uses the sort of meteorological forecasts and risk analysis to agree funding for early action that then

releases automatically when thresholds and triggers are met. So I think that's one of the examples of kind of joining things up.

But then when it comes to the sort of checking of administrative data, I think there's huge potential there. And that's proving harder than perhaps the promise suggested that it would be. Which I think is because data linkage is often really hard. So definitions of migration and mobility in innovative data sets, they don't always easily map onto more statistical – conventional, statistical definitions. And then you also asked me to touch on data quality and privacy issues.

You know, the basic point is that if you're suing smartphone data, even if most displaced people have a smartphone, they do not all have a smartphone. Maybe one family has a smartphone. It's not always individuals. They are offering you whole population data, which is in many ways very rich, but you have to attend to the fact that it's biased data. There will always be people left out. And if you're making policy and programmatic decisions based on that, you do have a risk of skewed decision making, ultimately.

And then trust, which Erol and Edwin both mentioned. You know, I was reading about that – the fiasco about Uber data recently, and those academics. And actually, the study that they got into trouble on was describing that driving an Uber might be a route out of the banlieues in Paris. And that was actually a study that I cited – (laughs) – in my research. So it really was a bit of a moment for me, where I thought, oh, you know, I've been very enthusiastic about big data for some time, but do we always know if it's, in particular big tech companies, what their motivations are?

So I think this all points to the need for legislative frameworks that enable both nontraditional data for policymaking and traditional statistics, and also connect to statistical offices, but also regulate access to data held by the private sector, and address that individual privacy piece.

Mr. Yayboke: This is why I'm hopeful that the robots are not going to take over, is because I think data analytics is a tool to help in these scenarios, but it's not the only tool. I mean, you need people. You need, you know, interoperability between data systems. You know, Edwin, you talked about the humanitarian development peace nexus. It's hard to think about that nexus without data interoperability. And to a certain extent, you can automate some of that, and you can create some of that interoperability by code and in other ways.

But you do need people not only to work within the systems, but you need to – as Meghan was saying – sort of think about this – you know, incorporate qualitative ideas into this as well, and contextual ideas, and understand the limitations. You know, your household, one smartphone per household's point is a really good one. I mean, we think about – you know, we almost

assume that it's one smartphone per person. But as you mentioned, Meghan, that's most likely not the case in a lot of these scenarios.

Ugochi, I wanted to follow up on something you said as well. You know, you talked about how IOM is really prioritizing data and analytics. And you give a couple examples of this. But I was wondering if you could dive a little bit deeper on what do you do with that? What do you do with those data? Do you preposition goods? Do you send staff to places where you know disasters are going to happen? Or, you know, if you're trying to predict where conflict or climate events are going to happen, you know, what do you? You're the director – the deputy director general of IOM for operations, which I'm assuming means, you know, you're involved in deploying people and stuff. So how do you use technology and innovation in doing that part of your job?

Ms. Daniels: Thanks, Erol. So there are a whole range of uses of the data. And one of the things that we really pride ourselves on in IOM, you know, going back to your point about the nexus, is that we're, what we call it, a triple-mandated agency, in that we work in humanitarian, peace, and development settings. And really that enables us to have the data that is required to work across the nexus and bring coherence in our programming, ultimately, for solutions. For solutions to displacement but also, you know, we've talked a bit about predictive analytics.

So, for instance, I spoke about our solutions and mobility index. And the way we are using that – you know, I mentioned Mozambique, but there's also – we're also using it in 10 other countries. And these are countries with major displacement. So we're looking at Iraq. We're looking at Nigeria. We're looking at South Sudan. We're looking at Ethiopia. And using this to inform particularly our – what we would call transition programming, how we do social cohesion, how we do community-based planning involving the community, how we identify communities that are ripe for solutions, so to speak.

And then I spoke about our Transhumance Tracking Tool, which we're using in the Sahel, in West and Central Africa. It's providing information about mobility trends. It's allowing us to highlight unusual movements and anticipate the associated potential emergence of possible tension and conflict, throughout – I mean, through the monitoring of how the pastoralists are moving along the traditional transhumance channels. And then based on this, informing early warning, anticipatory action, but at the community level. I think the point I want to make – the strong point I want to make about the data and how it's used is that really not just – not just that it's robust, but that it's granular for these – for these local and contextualized solutions.

And then I had talked about early warning systems in Haiti, with our data. And enable us to identify in that setting the threats – well, first of all, understanding the community's perceptions of security, how they see threats to security, and identifying those threats to then inform programming on community-based services. And let's not also forget that, yes, there's a lot that we do as – that's done by us as IOM working at the community level. But there's also a lot that we use this – that we use this data for in our support to governments, and the solutions that governments themselves have come up with in dealing with – I mean, in coming up with the policy – the policy response.

So we have examples in Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and the Dominican Republic where they have used – where they've used the data for their own programs. And what's really important here is that when we have national governments, now we're also talking about – we're talking about innovation. We're talking about data. But we're also talking about scale, which is also critically important if we're ever going to make a dent to the – to the displacement that is happening at the – you know, at the largest numbers that we have – that we've ever seen.

And then I think the – I don't want to say – there's never the final point. But – and I just had a team discussion with colleagues on this this morning. When we look at the high level – the outcome of – the action agenda of the secretary-general, coming out of the high-level panel on internal displacement, and looking globally at where is the best shot for ending displacement. And the role that IOM's data is playing in that space. We lead in the – in the data working group around this. And right now this data is helping identify populations, communities, government, contexts at the ground – on the ground, where investments from the big actors, the governments, the multilateral banks, the international finance institutions – where they should invest the significant – the very significant funding that they have.

So the point I'm trying to make here is, yes, of course we need the data ourselves to improve our own programming. But if we're really talking about, you know, ending displacement, then the partnerships with government, the partnerships with the other actors – particularly the development actors and then – and those that can finance these solutions and using this data. And that critically important connector role that the data enables us as IOM to have. So let me stop there.

Mr. Yayboke: Thanks, Ugochi. And for those in the room, apologies that the Russians seem to be interfering with our video feeds.

Team Humanitarian Agenda, we have the ability to do audience questions, is that correct? So as we – raise your hand and we'll get a microphone to you. I

want to go to some audience questions here. But as we're doing that, and your staffs maybe annoyed with me, panelists, because I did not spring this question before. But one of the things I kept thinking about as you were talking about it is: This sort of incremental innovation or process innovation, it's so fundamentally important. That's one of my main takeaways from this panel. And it's also not sexy.

And so one thing – you know, when you think about policymakers who are a lot of times politicians, it's – you know, what do we want? Innovation and technology. When do we want it? Sort of incrementally over time based on evidence and effectiveness. And it's not always an easy sell to make. So three of you, maybe Meghan and Edwin and then ending with Ugochi, just a quick soliloquy on how do we get donors and policymakers excited about things like process innovation? Meghan?

Dr. Benton: Yes. You know what else isn't sexy? It's funding. And that is part of the answer to this question. We haven't really talked very much about innovative funding models, but one of the challenges is always that you have a displacement situation, all the donors want to fund something, they want results on a two-year timeframe. They don't have any plan for continuing funding beyond that. There's competition and duplication and, you know, all of the things that all of you in the room know.

So I think when it comes to thinking about iterative innovation and that process of establishing what works and then building on it, innovative funding models have to be part of it. And you know, it's interesting that social impact bonds, development impact bonds were such a kind of – were so in vogue a few years ago, but are still so few and far between, when I think that really does bring a kind of creative way of trying to build in really good measurement from the beginning and ensure that there are incentives for implementors to be creative and to experimental, and to be pursuing what works.

So for those of you who don't know, this is the idea that you have a funder who is a private funder, usually, who is absorbing the risk. And then government or other funders pay on results on a kind of incremental timeframe. So I think there's one that has just recently kicked off, which is called the Refugee Livelihoods Development Impact Bond in Jordan, which provides four-year micro-enterprise training and a grants program for refugees. And crucially, also vulnerable members of the local population, which I think is another real important piece that we haven't really talked about. That it's always important to make sure that you bring local communities on board with these things, rather than creating a division between a sort of beneficiary group and others.

And in that case, there's investors. So there's the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation. Then there's another implementing partner called Ferd. There's the Near East Foundation providing upfront financing. And then the Ikea Foundation and a couple of other foundations will pay depending on results at the end of it. And I think that, you know, innovative financial instruments are really a piece of this kind of slightly boring iterative innovation that you're talking about, Erol.

Mr. Yayboke: Edwin.

Mr. Kuria: Thanks. I think two quick points. One, I think we schooled up and improved our ability to coordinate on innovation. Because I think we're all doing our innovative approaches in our corners, and we are – whether it's across the U.N. agencies, or NGOs, local agencies, there is a complete disconnect. And we are not sharing the learnings well enough. We are not building on existing innovations. We are running with innovations that are funded. That's what we are building on, as opposed to building a platform where there's joint advocacy.

After we do the proof of concept and appreciate that what works is extremely important. And as long as it works in the local context, then all of us should – the sooner we do a lot of talking points of all the roundtable conversations, we should have joint advocacy around innovation to make sure that that's what ends up being policy and that's what ends up being funded, what has been locally tested, the proof of concept has gone through, and we are coordinating on those particular aspects.

The final piece is I think too we need to find local interlocators. And we need to anchor the innovation to be able to make sure that it is – it speaks to the regional government's plans, it speaks to the local council's plans, it is a costed action plan behind it, and then that's what is – will drive the funding mechanisms. The reality, however, is that the idea is always way, way ahead of our internal processes, across any agency. So you – the innovation idea is ahead of our paperwork, our processes, our bureaucratic layers internally that we have to fix and make sure that the idea and innovation is matched by operational funding. That the operational platform is funded enough to take on these ideas as they come up. Back to you.

Mr. Yayboke: Yeah, thanks for that. And it's not just about making innovation sexy, it's about making coordination sexy. I like that you started with that. But, no, in all seriousness it's – I think the messaging and communication aspect of this is quite critical, and certainly can be done, as you mentioned.

If there are questions, you can go ahead and raise your hand now. Ugochi, I'll go to you with the same question. You know, how do you make this interesting, especially this sort of more slow onset innovation, perhaps, or

process innovation? How do you think about that in terms of messaging it to IOM's donors? You've worked across the U.N. system as well, so feel free to – you know, whether it's UNRWA, or UNFPA, or the others that you've worked with. You know, how do you – if we're believing this innovation – some of this innovation, the more durable parts, perhaps, are not shiny toys, but rather sort of slow onset or incremental. How do you – how do you make that interesting to people?

Ms. Daniels: Erol, Meghan and Edwin have, you know, spoken a lot about, you know, many of the different parts of that – coordination, communication, flexible financing, et cetera. But in addition to that, something I'd like to highlight – and I – and I've been in – I don't want to say I've been in this business, but I've been working on this for quite a while now. And I think what has become apparent is that if we – and this – if we continue – I believe up until the World Humanitarian Summit, which was in 2015, it became very clear that if we continued with our approaches and the way we were working, we are never going to be able to meet the humanitarian needs, not to talk of ending displacement.

And therefore, a different way of working was required. And, you know, one of the things that technological advancement has enabled is the role of – the role of tech and tech tools in innovation. So I give all of this background because I don't think we necessarily – I don't think necessarily the challenge is to make it sexy. I think what is important is that where we have shown from our experience and from our programming that this works is that how do these key lessons learned from innovation solutions, how do they – how are they then incentivized to stimulate further solutions and – well, innovations for solutions. How is it then connecting up with the funding that is available?

I mean, there's an excellent example of this in the – in the DIV, the Development Innovation Ventures, USAID's Open Innovation Program that provides grant funding on a tiered evidence approach that maximizes impact per dollar spent. So, again, there's the link with the evidence, and then investing based on the evidence. So I think what – and it behooves all of us on the programing and operational side is building – is making sure that we're building that evidence. That we are proving – we're proving – that we're able to prove that these are bankable solutions, that these are smart investments, that they are – and that – and that they're having impacts, and they're having impact at scale. And that then enables recognition that innovation often takes time. It is often not sexy. And that we do need multiyear and flexible funding.

A final point on coordination. And, Edwin, you know, had made this point. Because it's important for all of us in understanding which solutions would work where. And then of course, all of the issues around interoperability,

comparing new solutions and practices, dissemination of the innovation. So I think that the bit about being sexy, I think we're kind of past – I think we're kind of past that as being the challenge. I think more of the challenge is pulling all of this together so that the different roles that need to be played – whether it's on coordination, whether it's on implementation, whether it's on design, whether it's on funding, whether it's on building evidence. I think what's really important here is how all of that comes together.

And right now, certainly for governments and for the multilateral banks – and not just even the multi – even for private investment. What they're looking for is where can they invest for impact? I remember being in the Philippines and meeting with the minister for finance and planning. And he wasn't asking me in my role for assistance. He was asking me, tell me what works that my government can invest in? So I think if we have – if we have these solutions, and then, you know, all of the other pieces, that's what's – that's what's really critical for us to have impact, for us to be – for it to be at scale, for there to be the partnerships and coordination necessary. And ultimately about solutions that are durable.

Mr. Yayboke: Time flies when you're learning a lot. I just looked at the clock. We maybe have time for one maybe two questions, if the panelists would respond in probably 30 seconds. So are there hands or do we pass out the microphone at all? Yeah, Brian, go ahead.

Brian Kelly: Yeah, super. Thank you, Erol. My name is Brian with IOM. It's great to see my big boss on the screen.
And just it was a couple of things. And I'll make it super brief. Something innovative about dealing with displacement is it not happening in the first place. And that's about social cohesion programming, or local governments and community programming. Maybe an intervention works. So how do we deal with that proving the absence of a negative issue? Because something didn't happen, so we need more money to make sure it continues not to happen, right? That's a real tough sell. And everyone's accountable. If we have funding from AID, they have to go back to Congress. There's all the level of accountability. So in fact, I'll just keep it to that one question. Something we wrap our heads around. Over.

Mr. Yayboke: Yeah. So, panelists, I'm going to ask you to prove the counterfactual in 30 seconds or less. (Laughs.) I'm just kidding. How do you think about this idea of prevention, which is something that we haven't talked about. So, thanks, Brian, for bringing that up. Maybe what we can do is go Edwin, and then Meghan, and last word to Ugochi, before we wrap.

Edwin.

Mr. Kuria: Sure. Just a quick answer is, like, in Ethiopia we are doing a project called Trade for Peace, where we're using economic empowerment for two potentially warring communities, with the premise that if they trade together and find mutual benefits from the business space, then it has shown a lot of increase in social cohesion. And this is for the South Sudanese refugees in Gambella, where it's ethnic conflict, that we have found a way that is our most solid connector, which is trade across the two community. Over to you, Meghan.

Mr. Yayboke: Thanks for that. Meghan.

Dr. Benton: Erol, I was really hoping you'd take more than one question because I really think that Brian's question is unanswerable and methodologically problematic and going to bother me. It's going to keep me up tonight. So thanks so much, Brian, for the sleepless night ahead. Yeah, I don't – (laughs) – I don't know how you do that. I mean, I think it's a really great question. And I think also relates to what Ugo said about the importance of pulling everything together. You know, we don't do innovation for the sake of it. We do it to achieve a particular goal.

But I'm not sure that ending displacement is a viable goal. So even if it would be problematic for donors and for proof, I don't think it's realistic. And so maybe instead we should think about how we define success, and what actually we're aiming towards. And I think the answer to that is something like maintaining political will for addressing displacement, and funding to the scale of need, and providing opportunities for IDPs and refugees to become self-reliant as early as possible. And also using funding to invest in the broader economic and policy environment to sort of expand the pool of economic opportunities for everyone.

I mean, I think maybe instead of ending displacement, what's more realistic is that it could become a non-deal. Which is why I started with that point about the pragmatic approaches in Latin America and temporary protection in Europe – ways to absorb displaced populations that prevent a backlash and kind of make it a non-deal, in a sense that status doesn't become an issue, they have instant access to labor markets, integration can start from day one. And, you know, the point about sponsorship models is that that helps communities who are brought into displacement as something they are helping to address, instead of something that happens to them. So could displacement instead be a non-deal, instead of not happen at all, as a viable goal?

Mr. Yayboke: Excellent points. Ugochi, last word to you.

Ms. Daniels: Well, first of all, it's about being able to measure impact well. And there was a time, you know, end the trend was very sexy – going back to your sexy

term. And in many of the areas that we're talking – where we're dealing with cyclical displacement and secondary, tertiary displacement, these are trends that have been going on for years. So it is possible to show that we have ended a trend, that we've broken a cycle. And I want to end where I started. And that's with what the populations themselves will define.

I was speaking to women at the food distribution in South Sudan. They've been displaced due to flooding. But prior to that, they've been displaced due to conflict. And what they wanted was not more assistance. But what they wanted was skills in alternative livelihoods so that wherever they were, they would be able to take care of themselves, take care of their children, take care of their families. So we need to be measuring – you know, we need to be able to speak to this in the terms that those who are displaced are speaking about it.

And if we are – you know, if – and through the work that IOM is doing – and this was in Bentiu – at least we know that for this year, those communities are not going to be displaced because of the preventive action that has been taken to mitigate against the impacts of flooding, of climate-induced – the impact of climate change on displacement. So the counterfactual is hard to prove, of course. But, you know, let's keep this people centered. Let's look at what the impact is. Let's see how to change the trend that displaced populations have been dealing with, and from all the data we know with regard to the impact of climate change, the displacement that will happen in the future if people don't have solutions to stay, solutions to move, and solutions while they are on the move.

And back to you, Erol.

Mr. Yayboke: Ugochi, Edwin, Meghan, I could talk to you about these issues all day but, alas, we have to make room for David Miliband, who I just saw enter the building. So thanks to the three of you. This was really informative, really interesting. Audience, please join me in thanking our panelists. (Applause.) And we'll see everyone back in six minutes, 20 after 4:00 Eastern time. Thanks again to the panelists.