

*Deeper Look January 2018, New approaches to refugee and migration needs, Patrick Fine, Jana Mason*

*Patrick Fine:* Hello and welcome. I'm Patrick Fine, CEO of FHI 360, and this is *A Deeper Look* podcast, where we take a deeper look at how the international community perceives and addresses the human development challenges facing the world.

Last year, we took a deeper look at the promise, the shortcomings and the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals.

If you're new to the podcast, welcome. I invite you to subscribe to *A Deeper Look* on SoundCloud or iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts.

In 2018, we will be examining the topic of humanitarian crisis and emergency response. To that end, I'm very pleased to have Jana Mason with me today to kick off the 2018 *Deeper Look* series.

Jana is the Senior Advisor for External Relations and Government Affairs at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UNHCR. That's the specialized U.N. agency that provides emergency assistance to people displaced by oppression, conflict and natural disasters. Jana, welcome.

*Jana Mason:* Thank you Patrick, it's a pleasure to be here.

*Patrick Fine:* Jana is an authority on humanitarian response, and so she's the perfect person to kick off this first episode of our 2018 series dedicated to crisis response.

Prior to her work at UNHCR, Jana served as a director at the International Rescue Committee, and earlier in her career, she worked as an analyst for the U.S. Committee for Refugees and as a government liaison at the Immigration and Refugee Services of America.

Jana, I wanted to take a deeper look at humanitarian issues and crisis response, because it looks to me like while the world has been making a lot of progress on many fronts, such as reducing child mortality, fighting infectious disease, and reducing extreme poverties, many of the challenges targeted by the Sustainable Development Goals, we're at the same time seeing larger and more devastating complex emergencies than at any time since the end of World War II, over 70 years ago.

During the podcast this year, I want to take a deeper look at what looks like a giant contradiction in our world. So, let me start by

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asking you about the big picture. Am I right in thinking there are more crises and more people who are displaced and affected by crisis than at any time in our lifetimes?

*Jana Mason:* Absolutely. Well, well thank you for phrasing it that way. I do see this as one of the defining issues of our times, humanitarian crises and the number of people who have been affected by it. It's hard to know, if you go back throughout history, what the largest level of uprooted people may have been, but certainly as far as we know, this is the highest number of forced displacement on record. We often say since World War II, but I think it's fair to say in recorded history we're at the highest level of people who have been forced to flee their homes, whether they stay in their home countries or flee across a border, we are at at least 65.5 million right now.

The reason I say "at least" is because we systematically record these numbers at the end of every calendar year. The numbers for 2017 aren't out yet. So, the number we're working with is the number at the end of 2016, and that was about 65.5 million. And we know based on conflicts that erupted or reignited last year in 2017 that millions were uprooted and very few went home. So, I think it's fair to say that the numbers that will come out later this year will once again show an increase, and again sadly, the highest number in recent memory.

*Patrick Fine:* Ever.

*Jana Mason:* On, on record I think is, is one way to say it, very likely ever.

*Patrick Fine:* Yeah, so, we've been using language for the last three or four years that references back to the refugee crisis at the end of World War II.

*Jana Mason:* Right.

*Patrick Fine:* And what you're saying is that when we look at what's happened in the last say three years, since we were referencing World War II as the benchmark –

*Jana Mason:* It's only gotten worse.

*Patrick Fine:* It's gotten worse, and now it's the worst ever recorded.

*Jana Mason:* Right, because there was a time when the number of new people that may have been uprooted in any given year might be offset, if not in their entirety, at least partially, by the number of people who

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voluntarily went home. What we saw though starting a few years ago was a trend by which fewer and fewer people were going home. In fact, I think a couple of years ago, it was the lowest level of voluntary return since the 1980s, I think '83 or '84.

*Patrick Fine:* Wow.

*Jana Mason:* And the reason for that is the protracted nature of conflict.

*Patrick Fine:* I've heard different time spans given for how long people are displaced from their homes. And, and I've heard from 10 years to 17-1/2 years.

*Jana Mason:* And I used to say 19, 19 years on average. And then it turned out that that wasn't quite scientific, and some people disputed it, and it is, it is not a scientific number, because again people flee usually internally first. They're displaced within their home country. Usually before someone makes the, the monumental decision to cross a border and go into another country where they're not a citizen, where they may or may not speak the language, where they certainly may not be welcomed, usually they'll try to find safety closer to home first.

I mean if, if our house burned down or something happened to us, we would probably go visit relatives in Ohio before we would go across the border into Canada.

*Patrick Fine:* Right, sure.

*Jana Mason:* But if the government as a whole was persecuting us, and we knew we couldn't find safety anywhere in the U.S., we might go over into Canada or Mexico or somewhere.

So, sometimes, how long people have been uprooted isn't fully known, and sometimes, when they first become a refugee, they may not present themselves to the authorities right away. What we do know is that once people have been displaced for at least five years, then they tend to be displaced closer to 10, 15, 20 years.

Some crises truly have gone on for decades, if you look at Somalis in Kenya. Or some of the Burmese in Thailand and other countries, even before the Rohingya crisis, some of the other Burmese ethnic minority.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

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- Jana Mason:* You have second and third generation kids born in exile.
- Patrick Fine:* Or Afghans in Pakistan.
- Jana Mason:* Absolutely, or in Iran.
- Patrick Fine:* Right, in Iran, that's right, yeah.
- Jana Mason:* I mean Iran, Pakistan is still hosting a couple million Afghans, and Iran is hosting almost a million.
- Patrick Fine:* Afghans, yeah.
- Jana Mason:* So, you have children who identify as Somalis or as Afghans or as Burmese but have never been to their home country. Their parents may never have been to their home country, so all they know is life as a refugee. So, that is definitely one of the major trends that we've seen in recent years, is just the fact that conflicts don't get resolved, they go on and on. And the protracted nature of the conflict is the reason the numbers are going up, because the new conflicts are erupting and the old ones aren't resolving.
- Patrick Fine:* Right. Just to be clear around terms, so "refugees," "migrants," "forced migrants," "asylum seekers," "internally displaced people." Can you just give a quick definition of those different terms?
- Jana Mason:* Yeah, thanks for that. It's one of the frustrations of my professional life and, and that of many of my colleagues that these terms are often used incorrectly by the media, and it's not just that it's incorrect, it's that it has real policy implications for people, which is why it's important to get it straight.
- The term "migrant" has been used quite a lot in recent years. It used to be the word "immigrant" was used, now it tends to be more "migrant."
- I think the general understanding of a migrant is people who leave their country, go somewhere else for one reason or another.
- Patrick Fine:* But not forced.
- Jana Mason:* Not forced. Some people use the word "migrant" as, as the big umbrella category of which refugees could be a part. We tend to like to distinguish between refugees and migrants and use the term "migrants" more the way you would an immigrant, somebody who chooses to leave their country often for very legitimate reasons, for

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economic reasons, to make a better life for their children, to reunify with family. You know, this is one of the big issues of our time, getting a handle on whether migration is a good or bad thing.

Now, my agency is the U.N. Refugee Agency, not the U.N. Migration Agency, there is, there is one of those. So, our mandate is only for refugees, but generally, we look at migrants as people who choose to leave for economic reasons, sometimes political reasons, often to join family, they want to make a better life than they could find at home.

*Patrick Fine:* And they're seeking opportunity.

*Jana Mason:* They're seeking opportunity, and that phenomenon has existed, you know, through all of human history.

*Patrick Fine:* Throughout history, yeah.

*Jana Mason:* You know, many of our grandparents, great-grandparents, you know, particularly people with European backgrounds, you know Ireland, Poland, Italians, came here for economic reasons, so that would be migration.

Refugees are people who don't choose to leave, they are literally forced to flee. The legal definition is, first of all, you have to be across a border, you have to have fled your country to be considered a refugee. And you have to fear going home, it has to be a reasonable fear that you can't go home because you would be persecuted. Either you've already been persecuted, or you have a legitimate reason to believe you would be.

And this persecution has to be for one of five reasons: your race, okay, everybody knows what race is; your religion, that's clear; your nationality, which is usually interpreted to mean your ethnic background; your political views, political opinion; or because you belong to a certain social group, now this is the more flexible category. Social group has been defined as such things as women in a Muslim country that don't want to wear the veil, young boys who are being forcibly conscripted into a militia or military and they don't want to be conscripted. It can be people who are persecuted for their gender identity or sexual orientation. It can be a high-profile political family, any sort of rebel group. But basically, something about yourself that's fundamental to who you are that you shouldn't be forced to change.

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Normally, it's up to the government, your own government, to provide for your human rights. Human rights obligations first and foremost are government obligations. If your government won't or can't ensure your human rights and ensure that you're not persecuted, then you need international protection.

So, the definition of a "refugee" is enshrined in an international treaty adopted in 1951 after World War II. My organization was founded just the year before, 1950, and our mandate is to lead the international response to refugee situations and make sure that governments uphold their obligations, and the primary obligation any government owes to a refugee or someone who claims to be a refugee is to not send them back to the country of persecution.

*Patrick Fine:* So, in that figure that we were talking about earlier of 65.5 million, is that refugees or is that migrants plus refugees?

*Jana Mason:* That's total – no that's, that's forced migrants, forcibly uprooted people, because remember I said a refugee has to cross a border?

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Jana Mason:* Some people flee their homes, their literal home or their village or their town, but they haven't yet crossed a border, they're trying to stay safe.

*Patrick Fine:* So the 65.5 [million] includes internally displaced people.

*Jana Mason:* Internally displaced people. So IDPs, it's not a great term, but we call them internally displaced persons, are basically people who would be refugees, but they haven't crossed a border yet. So, the 65 million, exactly, breaks down roughly into two-thirds IDPs, one-third refugees.

*Patrick Fine:* What about economic migrants? So, you see this mass of people who are leaving the Sahel, so, traveling from sort of central Africa up through North Africa and then trying to get into Europe and mostly for economic reasons or seeking opportunity.

*Jana Mason:* And that's a great example, because I think that's the reason the term "migrant" started being used so much in the last couple of years, because we saw some of these big movements. You mentioned the Sahel, through Libya, that's what we call "the central Mediterranean route," people trying to get across to Italy.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

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- Jana Mason:* Then you have the eastern Mediterranean route, which is Syrians and Iraqis getting from Turkey to hopping over to the Greek islands and then through Europe.
- You have a phenomenon these days where refugees and migrants, economic migrants are using the same routes. In some cases, even the same smuggling networks.
- Now, trafficking is a whole different issue. We can talk about that, but basically, smuggling is where you put your life in the hands of somebody, usually pay them to help you get somewhere in an irregular means.
- If you're fleeing persecution, you can't always travel through regular means. You can't always get an exit visa, you can't always get a passport, you're not always going to be allowed in. You know, after World War II we've celebrated as heroes people that helped Jews escape Nazi Germany, you had the underground system.
- Patrick Fine:* Right.
- Jana Mason:* You had false papers, false documents, *Schindler's List*, all of that. Well, the same phenomenon is going on today. People sometimes are forced to flee in an irregular manner without documents or false papers, even paying smugglers. Even though smuggling is illegal, you don't want to criminalize or penalize the person.
- Patrick Fine:* What's the difference between smuggling and trafficking?
- Jana Mason:* Trafficking is generally where you are taken against your will, either forcibly or under false pretenses. They tell you that you're going to get a job in a restaurant, and you're actually going to be forced to work in the sex industry or held in inhumane conditions. Smuggling is more of a business transaction, where you pay someone to take you across a border or something.
- Patrick Fine:* Right, I see, I see.
- Jana Mason:* But again, the same would not be true of migrants. You know, we all believe in the U.N. that migrants should be treated humanely. But we also recognize that governments have the right, you know, through sovereignty, to control who enters their borders and how many. So, if a migrant crosses a border in an irregular means and does not otherwise have a legal reason to stay in that country, they

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are subject, legally, to deportation. Again, we always hope it would be humane. We don't think migration is a terrible thing, but again, they're subject to, you know, legal immigration laws and quotas.

*Patrick Fine:* If the 65.5 million people does not include the millions of people who are voluntarily moving across borders in search of other opportunities, then that puts a different perspective on the magnitude –

*Jana Mason:* Absolutely.

*Patrick Fine:* – of the number of people who either, because of political oppression, conflict or just lack of opportunity.

*Jana Mason:* Or climate change or natural disaster.

*Patrick Fine:* Or climate change, exactly. The migration out of the Sahel – so, out of northern Africa, Senegal, Mali, Burkina, Niger, Nigeria – a lot of that is driven by climate change, where the communities that people are living in just no longer have the capacity to support the populations.

*Jana Mason:* That's true, absolutely. But you mentioned a couple of countries, in particular, Mali and Nigeria, that have also experienced tremendous political strife and violence in recent years.

*Patrick Fine:* Right, right.

*Jana Mason:* Both of those countries have produced significant numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees fleeing across border, borders, and it is a forced migration crisis as well.

I should mention, even though fleeing the effects of climate change or natural disaster like an earthquake or a hurricane would not in and of itself make you a refugee, because again the definition is persecution, there is a connection here. You mentioned scarcity of resources because of climate change. Scarcity of resources sometimes leads to competition among groups.

*Patrick Fine:* Sure.

*Jana Mason:* You know, you still have the post-colonial legacy, where certain groups were favored and had more economic opportunities and access to resources than others. When you have scarcity, that sometimes leads to political conflict that can cause persecution that can make somebody a refugee.



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*Patrick Fine:* Sure.

*Jana Mason:* We know that most of the world's refugees are from the developing world, not all of them, but most of them are, and most of them, despite what a lot of the media thinks, are still being hosted in the developing world.

And these countries are often very prone to natural disasters and climate change. So, sometimes you have a refugee or displaced population whose situation is then exacerbated by natural disasters.

North Korea. For many years, despite knowing how oppressive North Korea is, people tended to view the North Korean refugees, many of whom were in China, as food migrants. But what we do know is that there's a connection between access to food in North Korea and political loyalty or political opinion. The regime has allowed more access to food to certain parts of the country, certain families, individuals seen as politically loyal, and has used denial of food as a weapon for other parts of the country. So, if people flee North Korea because they're hungry – on the surface it looks like they're just seeking food, which is traumatic enough, but it could be because of political persecution. So, sometimes even famines have a persecutory element to it. Food is often unfortunately used as a weapon in a lot of conflicts.

*Patrick Fine:* Well, the other thing is that both those groups – whether they're refugees or whether they're economic migrants – are now being subjected to these terrible consequences, such as the reestablishment of slave markets and – whether you're a refugee or a economic migrant – the exploitation of people, either economic or sexual or other abuse of people.

So, I wonder at what point does the international community have to reckon that these distinctions between a refugee and a migrant may no longer reflect the reality of how to understand the people's situation so that we can effectively respond to provide services and assistance?

*Jana Mason:* Absolutely, both migrants, refugees, whatever their status, many of them are suffering horrendous abuses, either where they came from or en route or get caught up, like you said, in trafficking networks, and we need appropriate responses to all of that. I mean, there are human rights agencies within the U.N. Governments have obligations, NGOs are very important. But I don't want to lose the fact that within these movements, refugees are a specific category

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of people that have certain rights and are owed certain obligations. If you look at the eastern Mediterranean route that I mentioned, the media, you know, these are people going across the Mediterranean

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*Patrick Fine:* Syrians –

*Jana Mason:* – Syrians, Iraqis, many others as well, but it was largely Syrians. The media was calling this a "migrant crisis," across the Mediterranean, into Europe, the migrant crisis. We kept saying, "You really need to refer to it either as a refugee crisis or at least migrant and refugee crisis," because we knew that about 85 percent of the I think it was about a million people, in 2015 I think it was, were from the world's top 10 refugee-producing countries. On the eastern route, something like 92 percent of them were Syrians. So, it was largely a refugee situation.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Jana Mason:* I mean, when you make the decision to put your children in a boat, to say "boat" it's a generous term, an un-seaworthy vessel, and there's a high percentage that you and your children may not make it, you tend to do that because you feel you have no other option, that's usually a refugee situation.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Jana Mason:* And not that economic motives aren't powerful, but when you see people putting themselves in that sort of danger, they're usually fleeing something that they perceive as, as worse, that they're going to die if they stay where they, where they came from.

So, another example would be the situation right here in our region, of asylum seekers from Central America. There's a lot of confusion. The word "migrant situation" has also been used to describe that. And yes, there are people fleeing the northern triangle region of Central America still for economic reasons. But, we also know there's a horrendous violence going on that is even worse in some ways than the Central American wars of the 1980s and '90s.

How you determine they are a refugee is, in this case, whether they get into the U.S. or into Mexico or another country that has an asylum system and assesses their asylum claim, then you decide if they're a refugee or not.

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*Patrick Fine:* My sense is that very few of the people who are coming across the southern border of the U.S. are being considered as refugees.

*Jana Mason:* Because there's such a backlog in asylum processing in the U.S., many of them have not yet had a full hearing on the merits of their claim. Those who have, a not-insignificant percentage has actually been granted asylum.

And in Mexico, the same thing is happening. They're not all trying to come to the U.S., that's also a little bit of a misunderstanding. We're actually working to try to help Mexico improve its own asylum system so that some Central Americans who get there don't have to make that dangerous journey northward through the desert, often dying at the hands of smugglers, to try to get to the U.S.

There are two ways the U.S. provides protection. People, whether they cross a border or they get into the U.S., they apply to the U.S. government for protection. This is through the asylum system. If they're granted asylum, a year after they're granted asylum, they can get their green card, unless they've done something to make them ineligible. Five years after being granted asylum, they can become citizens.

In the meantime, there are NGOs and others that will help them. And of course, once they're granted asylum, sometimes before then, they're able to work legally so they just go on making their lives. We [the U.N. Refugee Agency] have, we have no role in that.

The part we do have a role in is through refugee resettlement. Refugee resettlement is available for less than 1 percent of the world's refugees, but these are people who are particularly vulnerable in the host country.

So, say for example – Syrians in Jordan, in Lebanon, in Turkey, Somalis in Kenya, Afghans in Pakistan. You have all these hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of people living as refugees in that country. They're all vulnerable if they go home, but some of them are at particular risk even in the host country. I'm talking about survivors of torture or trauma, unaccompanied kids, elderly, people with severe medical needs, disabled. We look at some of them and say, "They can't stay where they are," they're particularly at risk. And we identify them as being in need of resettlement, in other words, another country to provide a solution.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

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*Jana Mason:* So, the U.S., Canada, Australia, some of the other, some of the Nordic countries, other countries around the world, but the U.S. is the largest. They've agreed to provide a certain number of resettlement slots for refugees.

*Patrick Fine:* But that's been reduced, right?

*Jana Mason:* That's been reduced significantly.

*Patrick Fine:* For 2018 the number is now 45,000.

*Jana Mason:* Yes.

*Patrick Fine:* The expectation is it may not even reach 20,000, given the kind of additional bureaucratic requirements that have been placed on qualifying for one of those spots.

*Jana Mason:* Right. And that would be unfortunate. The U.S. has been the world's leader in refugee resettlement, often taking up to half of any particular population that needs resettlement. You know, 45,000 may seem like a large number to some listeners and to others, but at the height of the Vietnam War, the ceiling, the target for refugee resettlement in the U.S. was over 200,000.

And throughout the '90s, because the formal refugee program started in the early '80s, and throughout the '80s and the '90s, it was in the hundred thousands. Then it started going down, then it started going back up again. But again, 200,000 were easily absorbed into this country.

*Patrick Fine:* Do you know what the number that were actually resettled last year was in the U.S.? Was it 60,000?

*Jana Mason:* Close to 60,000, maybe 56, 57.

The number had been, had settled at about 70,000 for a number of years. Then after the Syria crisis, the previous administration, the Obama Administration, was working to increase it, it was 85,000 a few years ago, and it was supposed to go up to 110,000. The Trump Administration came in and reduced it to 50 and now to 45.

Resettlement is a discretionary program. Unlike when people come to the U.S. and apply for asylum, resettlement is purely a discretionary program that governments do in order to be seen as

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sharing the burden with other countries, in providing a solution, a long-term solution for people that don't have any other option.

It is discretionary, so, you know, the Trump Administration, like any other government, is within its rights to decide how many it will bring in, but again, for so long we've counted on the U.S. to be in a leadership role in resettlement, that we hope that the new security procedures will get worked out quickly, and hopefully that that larger numbers of resettlement can resume as soon as possible, because these are people that –

*Patrick Fine:* Hope springs eternal.

*Jana Mason:* Absolutely, we couldn't do this work if it didn't!

These are people that really don't have another solution. Because, as we were talking about earlier on, you know, the primary solution that my agency works for is return. Now, most refugees do want to go home. They want to go back to where they have their homes, their, their land, their property, their self-respect, their sense of identity, everybody wants to go home. But, as conflicts drag on, and they can't do that, it becomes more and more difficult. Nevertheless, a voluntary return is the first solution that we pursue, and that's why most refugees are sitting, waiting in host countries, waiting for conflicts to resolve.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Jana Mason:* Like the over 5 million refugees, you know, they didn't all go to Europe, they didn't all come here, over 5 million are still sitting in the Syria region, in neighboring countries.

*Patrick Fine:* Right, right.

*Jana Mason:* Some of them tentatively have started to test the waters by going back. We don't yet think the situation in Syria is safe enough for large-scale return; we're not facilitating such return. But, if people choose to go back on their own, even though we didn't organize it, we will provide them some assistance.

We are hoping that within the next year or two or however long, that there will be a political solution in Syria, and large numbers will be able to go back in safety and be able to rebuild their country.

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The second solution is supposed to be local integration, where they can at least stay in the host country. Since most refugees are in developing countries that have their own economic challenges, political challenges, most of them aren't keen to have a whole new population of legal people who they see as competing for jobs and resources and such.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Jana Mason:* Resettlement. You know, in recent years, only around 100,000 have been able to [be] resettled globally, so we're talking about a drop in the bucket. So, these are people that really – again the medically needed cases, victims of torture, elderly, women at risk – these are the people that need resettlement.

*Patrick Fine:* Right, right.

*Jana Mason:* So, we hope those numbers would stay open. Since these three solutions, these three durable solutions I talked about, since none of them are really doing the job, the most interesting thing that's happening in the refugee world right now is that we're looking at a new approach. Along with development actors, the World Bank, other governments, we're really coming together to look at a new way forward for responding to refugees. And that involves giving more assistance to the host countries to help not only the refugees, but their own citizens, so that it's a win-win.

*Patrick Fine:* Yes.

*Jana Mason:* We're looking at something that could be temporary. And the World Bank has been a big actor in this and starting to give more loans to middle-income countries like Jordan that normally wouldn't be eligible, and these are concessional loans, where the interest rates are very favorable, long payment period. But the concession is even though they can use this money for their own standard of living, for their own people, they have to do something for refugees as well, such as give them work authorization.

If these host countries would give legal work visas or work authorization to the refugees so that they could work in legal markets, make a living wage, then they could provide for themselves and their families. They wouldn't have to send their kids out to work, they could go to school. They would have a bit more hope for the future. They would be using their skills. The kids would be using their brains getting an education. And eventually, when the situation at home is resolved, they can go

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back with skills, with education and contribute to rebuilding the country. If they don't go home any time in the foreseeable future, at least with skills and education, they can enhance the situation in the host country. If they do get resettled, they can bring valuable skills to their host country. It's a win-win for everybody.

*Patrick Fine:* So, you're talking about a new approach. If you look at what these crises look like in their character, is it any different in the 21st century than in the 20th century? What has changed between our perception of humanitarian crisis, whether manmade or natural, and the way we address those crises today versus say 20 years ago or 30 years ago?

*Jana Mason:* In the 20th century, it was very reactive. And what we learned is that the international community is not very good, unfortunately, at preventing conflict before it starts or resolving it in any sort of a timely manner after it does start, probably not even very good at predicting it.

I think it's exciting that there are all sorts of new models now that can help us predict conflict, whether it's something technological like Google Earth that can look and see what's happening, or all sorts of predictive analytics.

We have to really take seriously the mandate to prevent conflict. We're not very good at predicting, preventing or resolving these things, and until we're able to do that, conflict after conflict is just going to keep happening. And you know my agency – basically being a humanitarian agency, you know, I think we play an incredibly valuable role, but we're basically putting a Band-Aid on the wound.

You know, we have so many crises going on at the same time. The big ones that are always in the news, Syria of course it's been going on so long it's not getting as much attention as it used to. I think we finished this past year being about 50 percent funded for the Syria situation.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Jana Mason:* We used to be higher, but again, attention is starting to wane. Now, the Rohingya crisis, from Myanmar, Burma, where people have fled into Bangladesh, about 650,000 since late August, that appeal for funding is currently about 80 percent funded, which is great, it still means, of course, it still means we have a 20 percent funding

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gap, but 80 percent funded in our world is pretty good. But then we look at a number of crises –

*Patrick Fine:* What about CAR, the Central African Republic?

*Jana Mason:* Exactly, Central African Republic the last time I checked was something like 9 percent funded in terms of funding needs.

*Patrick Fine:* Yeah.

*Jana Mason:* Unfortunately, a lot of the conflicts in Africa, CAR being one of the, the main ones that's not getting enough attention. But if you look at the Nigeria, Lake Chad Basin, you know at the height of Boko Haram, it was getting a lot of attention, that fades.

*Patrick Fine:* Yes, right in northern Nigeria.

*Jana Mason:* If you look at Mali, you mentioned the Sahel.

*Patrick Fine:* Yes.

*Jana Mason:* Burundi who, who thinks about Burundi anymore? The DRC, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Colombia. It is certainly a lot safer than it used to be, but we still have millions and millions of internally displaced Colombians for a variety of reasons. That situation is not entirely resolved. So, these, these new crises erupt, or they seem to get better and then they re-erupt because we haven't had the time and funding and attention to really help it resolve itself.

Because so many countries being in close proximity and because crises spilling across borders and because certain instability in entire regions, you have countries trading refugees. You have Venezuelans in Colombia, Colombians in Venezuela, not just migrants but asylum seekers, refugees.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Jana Mason:* You have Syrian refugees in Iraq, you have Iraqi refugees in Syria, including some recent movements. You have conflicts that are no longer just limited to, you know, cross-border conflict between two countries. The nature of conflict now involves a lot more non-state actors, like Boko Haram, that doesn't limit itself to northeast Nigeria, that's why it's a conflict around the Lake Chad Basin.



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Isis, clearly, has been a factor in Syria and Iraq and through itself or their affiliates or Al Qaeda affiliates in various countries as well. So, the nature of conflict is really changing. It's no longer the Cold War type of situations that we used to have.

*Patrick Fine:*

So, that's a big difference in the 21st century versus the 20th century.

Let me end with two questions. One is, how do you see technology changing the way that the international community and specialized agencies, whether it's UNHCR or whether it's civil society organizations, are responding to humanitarian crises? You mentioned data analytics and predictive analytics as one feature of using technology, but do you see other applications of technology that are changing the way we're managing crisis?

*Jana Mason:*

We have all sorts of things going on that involve technology or the private sector that are incredibly exciting. One thing for us which is not new news anymore, but I still find exciting, is the way that we do registration of refugees and asylum seekers through biometrics.

You know, when you, when you say "biometrics," you used to think just fingerprints. We jumped ahead to iris scans. All the Syrians now, in the Syria region, those countries, have their iris captured, which is more reliable than a fingerprint. You can do it earlier. And for example, when we give out cash assistance to urban refugees, most refugees aren't in camps anymore, there are still some big camps around the world, governments often want them, but more and more refugees are in urban areas, in cities and villages trying to eke out a living.

The way it works is that we register a refugee family. All members of the family have their iris captured. Then we will transfer a certain amount of cash allotted to that family based on family size, vulnerability, certain characteristics. And a member of the family, often the woman, will go to a specially fitted ATM machine, you don't need a card, you just look into the camera that captures the iris, and it spits out the cash. It's tremendously useful. You know, it reduces fraud, it reduces waste, it reduces overhead, and it can also be used – the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is interested in cooperating with us to get that technology for security screening purposes, because if your iris was captured five years ago, we know that this refugee has been in Jordan for the past five years getting assistance and is who they say they are.

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There are a lot of private-sector companies that are interested in partnering with us. For example, the IKEA Foundation, a lot of people know that they helped design a refugee shelter. A lot of organizations want to provide a better shelter for us, often it's very, very expensive.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Jana Mason:* IKEA designed something we would, we would think of it as a trailer maybe. It's a hard-sided –

*Patrick Fine:* A container?

*Jana Mason:* Hard-sided container, but it's got a solar panel on the roof, it's got the, it's got a charging port inside where you can charge a cell phone or get a few hours of electricity. It provides better protection against the weather, against fire against intrusions, and it was developed to meet the needs of refugees, not only physically, but some of their cultural needs as well. And the IKEA shelter isn't the only container that we use.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Jana Mason:* Some governments have helped provided them as well.

*Jana Mason:* But certainly in the situations where some refugees are still in camps, and again we're moving more and more away from camps, but certainly you want a much better shelter, much better living situation.

Another aspect of technology is just distance learning, and this is something not specific to humanitarian agencies or situations, but again, you want refugees to be able, particularly children, but also adults, to be able to use their brains while they're in limbo.

If you can provide through technology a learning environment for them even in a situation where there may not be enough teachers, this is something that's very, very useful.

Connectivity is critical. Look at how we all rely on our cell phones. In situations where refugees don't have connectivity, they're basically, you know, out of the decision-making process in their own lives. They rely on cell phones as much as we do. Once refugees have connectivity, either where they are or along the way, along the journey if they're fleeing, that improves outcomes

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tremendously. So, working on cell connectivity and access to mobile technology is critical in humanitarian situations.

*Patrick Fine:* My last question is looking at the year to come. We're in January of 2018 - what do you see on the horizon for the international community's ability to confront and deal with humanitarian crises?

*Jana Mason:* Well, as you said, hope springs eternal. If you would have asked me [that] question a couple of years ago, I might have been more pessimistic and not seeing much change. I don't see too much change in conflict, the number and scope of conflicts around the world. But, this new approach that I mentioned really does give me and all of my colleagues some degree of hope, serious hope. The intersection of the work of humanitarian agencies and development agencies is closer than ever. We now recognize that development agencies need to be involved with humanitarians at the beginning of a crisis, not just once it's safe. Development goals for a country and humanitarian obligations toward refugees can coexist and go hand-in-hand.

*Patrick Fine:* Jana, I thank you so much. What a terrific conversation. And thank you to our listeners, both our returning listeners and new listeners. Remember, you can listen to last season's *Deeper Look* podcast, where we discussed the Sustainable Development Goals, on SoundCloud, iTunes, wherever you get your podcasts. And stay tuned throughout this year, we're going to continue to explore a wide range of issues related to crisis response.

Subscribe to *A Deeper Look* podcast today to get the monthly episodes. Also, I'd love to hear your reactions to this conversation, so please post your thoughts, and come back and catch the next episode of *A Deeper Look*.

Jana thank you again.

*Jana Mason:* It was a pleasure. Thank you so much.