

# Chapter 60

## Refugees and Humanitarian Settings

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### ABSTRACT

*Mass migration has become one of the 21st century's greatest challenges. With an estimated 214 million people on the move internationally and forced displacement at a record high, population mobility is one of the leading policy issues of the 21st century. Women and children with no identity can be missed by national social programs in addition to the risks posed by being on the move. Developments in Blockchain can enable the tracking and delivery of in-kind aid and facilitate cash assistance programs in humanitarian settings and coordinate, collect, and analyse data in crisis to enable a timely and appropriate response. This chapter presents the ways in which Blockchain is being deployed in humanitarian and refugee settings and a series of case studies from Finland, Moldova, Kenya, and Iraq. While promising progress has been made, there remains a need for more research and evaluation as these technologies are implemented, increased user participation in design, and to ensure that privacy and security issues are addressed.*

### INTRODUCTION

Blockchain has the potential to disrupt a large number of industries and change the lives of many. While in its infancy, it has potential to help solve some of the world's greatest humanitarian problems; identity, migration, asylum seeking, camp management, food and remittance distribution and much more (Ardittis, 2018).

We live in a time of increasing global mobility; both voluntary and forced. There are 25.4 million refugees in the world and some 3.1 million asylum seekers (Harper, 2018). Wars, violence, political upheaval, religious persecution, economic instability and sociopolitical crisis uprooted record numbers

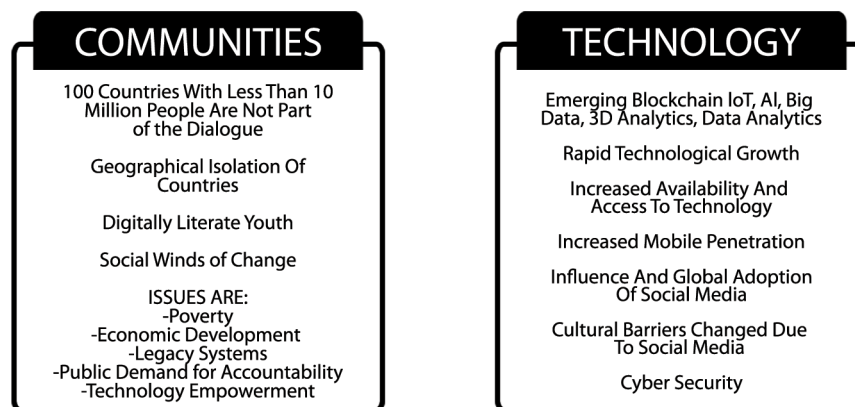
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of people last year; the UN Refugee Agency's annual Global Trends study (2018) finding that 68.5 million people had been forced from their homes across the world in 2017; 2.9 million more than in 2016 and the biggest increase UNHCR has ever seen in a single year (UNHCR, 2018). Mass migration has become one of the 21st century's greatest challenges. The UN have warned the death rate for refugees trying to reach Europe, particularly, is rising; for every 18 people crossing to Europe over the central Mediterranean between January and July 2018, one person died. The United States' zero tolerance on immigration policy has resulted in annual immigration arrests soaring from 110,568 in 2016 to 143,470 in 2017 (Chappell, 2018).

Of the 36 major industries that are likely to benefit from the use of Blockchain technology<sup>1</sup>, (CB Insights, 2018) INGOs are arguably making the most headway in proof-of-concepts, using them to resolve concerns regarding institutional financial accountability, data management, personal safety and security (Coppi & Fast, 2019). Save The Children have been investigating a humanitarian passport (Shah, 2017), the Red Cross piloted Blockchain in early 2018 to test the traceability and transparency of Islamic Social Finance (The Development Circle, 2018) and the World Food Programme's *Building Blocks* programme was one of the first of its kind to facilitate cash transfers to refugees on the Blockchain. To ensure these services were possible, however, fundamentals regarding satisfying identity claims were first necessary. Indeed, a task force has been established by the European Parliament to assess the ways in which Blockchain technology could be used to provide digital identities to refugees (Ardittis, 2018).

As leaders in the adoption of Blockchain technology for social impact, what follows in this chapter is a description of humanitarian proof-of-concepts and use cases for Blockchain technology. The aspects outlined in this chapter map closely to those in the B4SC Model of Current Influences and Drivers – elements within the Communities and Technology blocks, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Current Influences and Drivers – Communities and Technology



The discussion below provides a clear view of why there has been a galvanizing cry for the application of Blockchain in humanitarian settings.

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