FORCED
MIGRATION
review

Knowledge,
voice and power

Plus special feature on:
Social cohesion in
refugee-hosting contexts

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From the Editors

People with lived experience of displacement need to be heard. Their perspectives, strategies and solutions should be at the centre of discussions about policy and practice. The authors in this issue reflect on progress made but also on the road still to travel. They challenge attitudes, highlight injustices and make practical recommendations for change.

What started as an idea for a short feature has rightfully grown into a full feature on issues which are so important in our sector: representation, influence, privilege, access, discrimination and more. It has been an honour to work closely on the theme of 'Knowledge, voice and power' with the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN) as a key partner and to receive the generous financial support of both LERRN and the International Development Research Centre of the Government of Canada. We are particularly grateful to James Milner, Heather Alexander and Roula El-Rifai for championing this important topic and enabling it to be covered in FMR.

We are also grateful to the group of researchers and practitioners who gave their time to shape the call for articles – their insights were key in developing this issue. We thank our reviewers Pascal Zigashane, Mai Abu Moghli, Jennifer Kandjii and Heather Alexander for their thoughtful consideration of each article submitted. We are grateful to all the authors who share their voices in this issue and to the many authors who submitted excellent pieces that we did not have space to publish.

Our special feature on social cohesion in refugee-hosting contexts has been skilfully brought together by Cory Rodgers and his team, with the financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and the Jesuit Refugee Service.

As ever we would like to thank our core donors. Without them FMR's work would not be possible and we are very grateful to all those organisations who have given generously this year.

Not all of the articles in this issue are easy to read. Many question the status quo but we hope that they will generate discussion, fresh insights and, most importantly, change policy and practice.

With best wishes,
Alice Philip and Olivia Berthon
Editors, Forced Migration Review

Front cover image: It was not easy to find an image which communicated the theme of 'Knowledge, voice and power' but the concept of listening captured our imagination. This photograph, taken by Larry George II, fitted perfectly. A person is holding out headphones to each of us. Will we choose to take them and listen? (Credit: Larry George II)

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Mentoring new voices in forced migration publishing

Heather Alexander, James Milner and Alice Philip

Feedback from authors who participated in a new mentorship scheme offers useful insights into how to increase the inclusion of under-represented perspectives in forced migration publishing.

Publication, particularly in peer-reviewed journals, remains one of the most tangible ways to share knowledge on forced displacement, to advance scholarship and individual career goals, and to inform policy debates. A 2020 study of the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, arguably one of the most influential journals in the field, found that scholars based in the Global North authored 90% of articles.[1] During the same period, 85% of the world's forced migrants were to be found in the Global South.[2] This power imbalance biases scholarship in favour of forced migration issues in the Global North and raises fundamental questions about the distribution of power within the field of forced migration itself. There is a growing recognition that the status quo must change, both to promote the inclusion of Global South scholars for its own sake, but also to ensure that research reflects the knowledge and insights of those researchers closest to the phenomenon of forced migration, many of whom have invaluable lived experience. But how to turn that recognition into real change?

Gaining insights, seeking solutions

To explore how to improve access and representation, the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN) partnered with the editorial team at *Forced Migration Review* to support a new mentorship scheme aimed at increasing the inclusion of previously underrepresented perspectives. This initiative built on the promising results of other initiatives, especially the Displaced Scholars Peer Mentoring Program hosted by the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at the University of New South Wales and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute at Lund University. These initiatives provided peer mentoring and other support for early career scholars who have experienced forced displacement.[3]

To design the process, FMR and LERRN convened an advisory group composed of partners based in significant refugee-hosting regions of the Global South and people with lived experience of displacement. The group helped to shape the call for articles for this issue of FMR on 'Knowledge, voice and power' and also gave insights on how barriers to inclusion might be overcome. Following these discussions, FMR and LERRN conducted a survey of participants in an information session on 'Writing for FMR'[4] to gather information about barriers to publication. Survey respondents were mostly employed in academia, NGOs or UN agencies in the Global South. One third were individuals with lived experience of displacement, more than half were born in the Global South and one third were women. Insights gained from this survey included:

Language remains an important barrier to being published in FMR, particularly for refugees and others who have experienced displacement. Even though FMR both receives articles and publishes them in English, Arabic, French and Spanish, refugees and others with personal experience of displacement cited as a significant barrier the dominance of English in the international sphere, both real and perceived, and the corresponding lack of opportunity to write in non-FMR languages. By contrast, authors who were not refugees and/or did not have personal experience with displacement, regardless of their relationship to the Global South, were much more likely to cite lack of time for writing as a barrier to publication, rather than language.

Lack of knowledge about the publishing process and/or a lack of confidence in their ideas or in their writing abilities. Most survey respondents stated that they

faced some barriers to publication, perhaps because they had self-selected to attend a workshop on how to write for FMR. When asked what might break down these barriers, all respondents cited mentorship as among the most likely interventions to increase their participation. Specific themes which should be covered by mentors included informing scholars about the publishing process, building confidence in the author's ideas and helping them structure an article for publication.

Mentoring new authors
In response to the urgent and identified need for mentorship in forced migration publishing, FMR and LERRN launched a pilot mentorship programme in December 2021, designed to promote the inclusion of authors with forced migration backgrounds and/ or from the Global South in the magazine. Nine authors were selected on the strength of their article proposal and a short personal statement. Authors then benefitted from an hour of one-to-one online mentoring and subsequent written input on their draft article. While participation in the programme did not guarantee publication, it provided authors with tailored advice on how to make their submissions more competitive.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with all mentees saying the programme helped them overcome the barriers they faced to publication and that they would recommend it to others. The majority felt they had improved their ability to write a strong article, which was the top reason most mentees joined the programme. Several mentees stated that mentoring had helped them refine their article topic, helping them to tailor it to the specific requirements of FMR. One participant also noted that they had been able to get targeted advice on writing about forced migration, something which was not available at their own institution.

Mentors also provided positive feedback, noting that they had learned from the interaction with their mentees, particularly about the various subjects covered in the draft articles. Several mentors went beyond the initial time commitment, sustaining an

in-depth, ongoing conversation with their mentees. Some mentors, however, said they felt unable to offer advice on some of the particular challenges faced by scholars in the Global South, such as the possible negative consequences of publication on politically-sensitive topics. Including more mentors with experience of these issues and in providing advice for those unfamiliar with navigating specific political sensitivities would be important in any future programme. The extent to which future mentorship programmes can address the barrier of real and perceived English hegemony in forced migration publishing remains to be seen.

Future plans
The success of the pilot mentorship programme has encouraged LERRN and FMR to continue to invest in proactive steps to increase the diversity of authors published on their communications channels. FMR intends to establish a more permanent scheme for those authors with forced migration backgrounds and/or living in the Global South who would like to receive support in the development of articles for the magazine. Alongside this, they will hold regular webinars addressing questions about the publication process and the specific requirements of the magazine. The pilot mentorship programme and the survey have provided extremely valuable insights which will help FMR to shape initiatives aimed at addressing the current imbalance in authorship.

LERRN will continue to support localisation in academic research through its webinar series[5] and other programming. In partnership with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), LERRN is launching a global network of Research Chairs on Forced Displacement[6] which will incorporate the lessons learned from the mentorship programme, including peer learning and active promotion of linguistic diversity as part of an effort to shift power to Global South authors and academics.

The pilot mentorship programme highlighted the importance of meaningful

partnerships and peer learning among and between authors with extensive publication experiences and those with less experience, particularly from the Global South. It also highlighted the need for support to create an inclusive environment in publishing, particularly to overcome barriers such as language exclusion and to mitigate risks to safety faced by some authors in the Global South. Ultimately the goal of all these initiatives is to ensure that practice and policy are debated and shaped by those most closely affected by forced migration today. There is much yet to be done to achieve this goal, particularly to address English dominance in forced migration publishing, but we are committed to playing our part in contributing to this overdue and necessary change.

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1. Rachel McNally and Nadeea Rahim, "How global is the Journal of Refugee Studies?" (2020). bit.ly/global-jrs

2. Following the invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing displacement crisis these statistics have shifted, with the number of people displaced within Europe climbing significantly. However, the dominance of Western (and particularly Anglophone) authorship remains within publishing.

3. Kaldor Centre Displaced Scholars Peer Mentoring Program: bit.ly/kaldor-mentoring

4. To view the webinar, visit www.fmreview.org/writing-fmr

5. bit.ly/lerrn-webinar-series

6. bit.ly/idrc-research-chairs

Bridging youth and power: the Youth Advisory Board in Cairo

Fnan Mhretu and Lokpiny Bol Akok

Experience gained in developing a Youth Advisory Board within Saint Andrew's Refugee Services in Cairo highlights the importance and the challenges of including the voices of unaccompanied refugee children and youth in discussions about issues that directly impact their lives.

Our goal in writing this article is to raise awareness about the issues facing unaccompanied children and youth (UCY)[1] and to inspire greater inclusion of their voices – our voices – in decision-making and policy discussions. We also hope to highlight the need to recognise knowledge and skills that do not fit into traditional educational pathways but that complement and are of equal value to standard types of education. The authors are current and former members of the Youth Advisory Board and refugee youth staff at Saint Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS), a refugee-led organisation providing legal, psychosocial, medical and educational services to refugees and vulnerable migrants living in Egypt. As refugees, our lives often face disruptions that may hinder our ability to pursue traditional

qualifications – but this should no longer be a barrier to inclusion and representation.

Challenges facing Unaccompanied Children and Youth

Egypt is home to more than 285,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers,[2] of whom over 4,000 are unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).[3] Unaccompanied refugee children and youth in Cairo face particular challenges accessing education, health care and financial resources, as well as trauma from migration journeys, discrimination and protection concerns.

Education: Access to education is one of the main challenges UCY face in Cairo. Students from Sudan, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen can legally attend public schools

in Egypt on an equal footing with Egyptian students[4]; however, many do not attend due to documentation issues, discrimination, or language and financial barriers. UCY of other common refugee nationalities in Egypt, including from Eritrea, Somalia, and Ethiopia, do not have guaranteed access to Egyptian public education. Private education is very expensive. Some UCY attend refugee community schools following the Sudanese curriculum but also face significant financial or language barriers and limited school capacity, making formal education certification extremely challenging. UCY often therefore enroll in life skills courses provided by local NGOs but these do not qualify UCY to access higher levels of education.

Health and medical care: UCY face several challenges to accessing public health care in Egypt, including language barriers, documentation requirements, finances and discrimination. Private hospitals are very expensive. These challenges particularly affect those with chronic diseases who need ongoing treatment. Some unaccompanied girls and young women who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence are turned away from hospitals because they cannot present proof of fatherhood or marriage.

Basic needs and staying secure: Many UCY struggle to cover their basic needs, including rent and food. They often live in overcrowded and unstable housing situations. UCY are only eligible for financial assistance from UNHCR until the age of 18 and not all unaccompanied children are able to receive financial assistance due to their asylum claims being incorrectly processed as an adult claim.[5] Where UCY are unable to cover their needs, some work in unsafe jobs where they are subjected to long hours without pay, discrimination, and arbitrary dismissals. Once UCY turn 18, they are left with little to no support to establish an independent life, exposing them to further challenges.

All these factors exclude the voices and knowledge of UCY from most academic and policy-level debates.

Role of the Youth Advisory Board

The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is composed of eight unaccompanied youth aged 18 to 21 years old who work at StARS. Its members are mixed in nationality and gender but all have lived experience of displacement. We therefore share similar challenges. The YAB serves as a bridge between youth, UCY clients, the management staff at StARS and external audiences. The YAB is designed as a pathway to meaningful youth participation in StARS' organisational development. We meet with youth staff and UCY clients to discuss challenges, brainstorm solutions and create advocacy strategies that are then presented to senior staff.

The YAB also meets with external stakeholders (such as donors and visitors from other local or international NGOs) to share our personal journeys and experiences in Egypt and to discuss the challenges that UCY face in Cairo, the YAB's achievements, and our ideas for improvement. We bring unique value to the conversation and help visitors better understand and empathise with the struggles of young refugees. We propose solutions by imagining ourselves in the visitors' position of power and by giving practical examples of the struggles UCY face on specific issues. Both within the organisation and with external stakeholders, the YAB raises the voices of youth and is an example of successful integration of youth into decision-making at an institutional level.

Successes

The YAB's efforts to directly advocate for the needs of UCY and include the voice of unaccompanied youth in StARS' programming have been successful in several areas. For example, in early 2019, the YAB identified that unaccompanied single teenage mothers were facing challenges in attending the StARS' Unaccompanied Youth and Bridging Program6 (UYBP) classes because they did not have anyone to care for their children. The YAB developed a proposal that they presented to StARS' management to establish a nursery for the children of these young mothers so they could attend class while having their children cared for.

Current and former members of the Youth Advisory Board and refugee youth staff meet at StARS premises (Credit: StARS)

In 2020, youth staff noticed that a lack of job opportunities, recreation activities and education put UCY at risk of alcohol and drug use in the streets. The YAB advocated to address this by opening a game centre at StARS so that UCY clients and UYBP students could spend more time in safe spaces.

The YAB also draws attention to the concerns of StARS refugee youth staff to address specific gaps and advocate for change. For the vast majority of us, English is our second language; consequently, youth staff requested to have access to regular English classes to strengthen their communication skills. After this was approved, the YAB advocated to hire two English teachers under regular contracts instead of volunteer positions. This was important because paid positions offer more reliability and accountability. Currently, more than 50 youth staff are being taught by two full-time teachers. The YAB also advocated for more computers and the creation of a resource library.

Traineeships at StARS help smooth the transition from a part-time youth assistant job to a regular full-time adult position (including into teachers, caseworkers and officers). In 2019, the YAB identified that youth would often lack the additional skills needed to compete with other adult refugees for certain job positions. Therefore, the YAB advocated for more traineeships for youth to be available across StARS departments. The trainee programme has been very successful, with many StARS programmes recruiting youth trainees.

Challenges: limited space, high expectations and the pandemic

Despite the YAB's ongoing efforts and successes many challenges remain. Within StARS, the YAB has successfully pushed for more space and recognition; however, advocating for issues affecting UCY beyond StARS remains a challenge. We know that, as unaccompanied refugee youth, we have something valuable to contribute to global discussions. Yet there are limited platforms

and spaces to include the voices of youth staff, both within programming and decision-making processes among service providers in Egypt and in wider humanitarian contexts.

One of the main challenges is managing the often high expectations among the youth staff of what the YAB can do to address the multiple challenges youth staff and UCY face. As refugee youth staff ourselves, it is difficult to manage these expectations, as we know and also experience these difficulties. In order to deal with these added responsibilities and pressures, the YAB receives ongoing support from higher management at StARS, but we also require time and support to continue strengthening our mediating and problem-solving skills.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many of YAB's plans, including plans for in-person meetings and community outreach. The YAB adapted by moving to mobile outreach, using WhatsApp and phones to talk with refugee youth staff. Identifying mental health support as a large gap, the YAB developed activities for UCY within StARS programmes and provided awareness-raising sessions through conference calls, using phone calls to get updates. The goal was to implement a peer-to-peer model for the early identification of mental health issues faced by UCY so they could receive timely psychosocial support.

Conclusion and recommendations

The YAB can be a model for other NGOs and service providers on how to include the voice not only of refugee youth staff but of all UCY. Institutions and service providers working in Egypt and globally should create safe spaces for youth to participate in decision-making processes on programmes and policies, and should prioritise harnessing their knowledge, voice and power. This includes recognising the potential that UCY have and supporting their ability to advocate for their needs in creative ways. Refugee-led community-based organisations should also prioritise engaging refugee youth. For true ownership of and agency in these processes, it cannot be others creating solutions for us, without us.

Using knowledge, being a voice and having power also means that we have

responsibility. Our achievements as the YAB can motivate and encourage other youth to play the same active role and to take their place in discussions affecting their lives, especially given the many challenges that come with being an UCY. More importantly, our experiences prove that refugee youth should be recognised as actors of change and their input seen as having equal value to that of other stakeholders involved in the decision-making process, particularly when it impacts the lives of UCY.

We are young but we want to become adults who listen to youth. We will propose better solutions and planning because of our personal experiences. With our knowledge, voice and power we will be the right people to implement sustainable change to improve the living conditions of displaced youth and to advocate for their rights, freedom and peace in Egypt and beyond.

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1. An unaccompanied child and youth is a person who is under the age of eighteen or 21 for StARS programming, and who is separated from both parents.

2. UNHCR (May 2022) 'Egypt Monthly Statistical Report' bit.ly/Egypt-May-2022

3. This number does not include unaccompanied youth over 18. UNHCR, Child Protection bit.ly/UNHCR-child-protection

4. Hetaba A., McNally C. & Habersky E. (2020), 'Refugee Entitlements in Egypt', *Cairo Studies on Migration and Refugees*, Paper No. 14, p.144, bit.ly/refugee-entitlements-egypt and Joint Platform for Refugees and Migrants in Egypt (2022), Common Situation Analysis: Education and Health Services for Migrants and Refugees in Egypt bit.ly/education-health-egypt

5. Folache Z and Ritchie (2020) 'Age assessment for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Egypt', *Forced Migration Review* issue 65 bit.ly/age-assessment-Egypt

6. The UYBP is a five-month educational programme that aims to help UCY develop skills to become independent. It includes courses in Maths, English, Arabic, IT and life skills.

Hear my voice: refugees' participation in Kenyan policy development

Lilian Obiye

The involvement of refugees in recent legislative changes in Kenya demonstrates how public participation can be used as a tool to empower refugees and give them an opportunity to influence policy.

Public participation is critical to the development of good public policy. Based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process, it contributes to the empowerment of communities and to informed policy development. However, refugees – who may be perceived as a threat to domestic harmony, seen as vulnerable and as unable to make decisions about their lives – are often excluded from such participation.

Examples of public participation include voting, attending meetings and participating in policy discussions. In the context of refugee protection, UNHCR defines public participation as "the full and equal involvement of persons of concern in all decision-making processes and activities in the public and private spheres that affect their lives and the life of their community".[1]

Participation rights in international law

The 1951 Refugee Convention does not deal explicitly with political rights of refugees in the country of asylum. However, Article 7 (1) notes that refugees should be afforded the same treatment (including political rights) as other 'aliens'. The Convention further notes in Article 7 (3) that refugees should continue to enjoy rights to which they were already entitled in their country of origin.

International human rights law includes more specific provisions relating to citizens' public participation, such as in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, public participation is embedded in a number of interconnected rights, such as freedom of opinion and the right to seek,

receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers, as provided in Article 19 of the ICCPR. Significantly, the ICCPR guarantees not only the 'right' but also the 'opportunity' to take part in the conduct of public affairs.

More recently, the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) specifically provides for the participation of refugees in decision-making processes, with Paragraph 34 stating that "responses are most effective when they actively and meaningfully engage those they are intended to protect and assist".

Benefits of participation

Displaced persons are affected – just as host communities are – by policy and legislation developed in the country of asylum. Public participation contributes to increased awareness by the community of legislative proposals, building a sense of shared accountability, and contributing to empowerment and inclusive practices. It also promotes the democratic and accountable exercise of power by leaders. The government gets an opportunity to hear directly from affected people, for example about gaps that need to be filled to improve service delivery. The public in turn feel a greater sense of belonging, which is particularly important to refugees and which helps foster unity, trust and dignity.[2] Refugees should be given a real chance to influence policy decisions through access to timely and relevant information, data or documents related to policy formulation and implementation.

Public participation in Kenya

The right to participate in public affairs is enshrined in Kenya's 2010 Constitution, whereby sovereign power is vested in

the people, including refugees. Article 10 specifically references "participation of the people" (popularly referred to as public participation) in a list of binding national values and principles of governance.[3] Article 118 provides that Parliament shall conduct its business in an open manner and facilitate public participation and involvement in legislative matters.

Since the Constitution was adopted in 2010, an increasing amount of legislation and policies have been invalidated by Kenya's courts due to inadequate public participation. In 2017, the Court of Appeal in Kenya commented that *"the issue of public participation is of immense significance considering the primacy it has been given in the supreme law of this country and in relevant statutes relating to institutions that touch on the lives of the people".*[4] It follows that members of the public and all interested parties have a right to challenge any administrative action, legislation or public policy decision on the grounds of inadequate public participation.

Refugee participation in Kenya
Kenyan courts have held that the standard to be applied in public participation is one of 'reasonableness', depending on the circumstances and facts of each case. This requirement of public participation extends to refugees. In 2020, Kenya's Constitutional Court invalidated the Refugee Community Leader Election Guidelines on the basis that the State Department failed to hold any public forum to gauge the concerns and obtain the input of the refugee community prior to the formulation of the Guidelines.[5]

In 2017, the Refugees Bill 2016 was presented to the President to sign into law. The Bill made provisions for the recognition, protection and management of refugees in Kenya. However, the President refused to sign the Bill and referred it back to the National Assembly for reconsideration, citing lack of public participation during the development of the Bill.[6] Unfortunately, Parliament was dissolved in 2017 and the Bill could not be discussed. But despite the Bill lapsing there was continuing momentum to review it. In 2019, parliamentarians instituted a series of

measures to facilitate public participation, in particular participation by refugees.

Firstly, Members of Parliament (MPs) visited Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps to engage with refugees and the host community and hear first-hand about their experiences. The MPs also met local officials and leaders who shared their challenges, concerns and recommendations. The visit to the camps provided an opportunity for many refugees to interact informally with the MPs and share their stories and concerns. As a result, the new Refugees Bill of 2019 reflected some of these concerns and included one of the specific proposals made by refugees, which related to shared use of resources among refugees and the host community.

Once a Bill has been introduced in the National Assembly, a government committee formally conducts public participation. For the Refugees Bill 2019, the Departmental Committee on Administration and National Security published an advertisement in local newspapers inviting the public to submit memoranda on the Bill. The advertisement also invited members of the public to attend public participation fora in six areas densely populated by refugees: Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kakuma refugee camp and Dadaab refugee camp. The six fora provided an opportunity for refugees and asylum seekers, NGOs, county governments and representatives from academia to share their views on the law. This extensive consultation with the public, including refugees, was in stark contrast to the single public participation forum conducted in 2017, which had been attended by only a handful of people, representing NGOs only.

The participation of refugees in consultations relating to the Refugees Bill 2019 was supported by a number of measures to ensure refugees had the skills, knowledge and confidence to participate effectively. Ahead of the formal consultations, various stakeholders with knowledge of refugee law held training sessions with refugees. This training was instrumental in demystifying the proposed law, clearly communicating the relevance of the provisions to the refugees, and in introducing the basic concepts of legislative

drafting and international refugee and human rights law. Refugees were subsequently able to draft a written memorandum in advance of the consultations, detailing their proposals, including on the need for the government to keep refugee information confidential and the need to increase the time period allowed for people to declare their intention to seek asylum to 30 days. This memorandum was signed and submitted to the MPs, and later described by the chairperson of the Committee, Paul Koinange, as "relevant and useful in review of the Bill".[7]

The opportunity for MPs to listen to individuals in Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps had an influence on both MPs and refugees. For refugees, the engagement with MPs during this visit complimented and increased the impact of their previous training and capacity building on refugee law. For MPs, the impact stemmed from personal interactions. During a parliamentary debate, for example, MP Oku Kaunya recounted meeting a young man who had been born in 1991 in Dadaab refugee camp and who, now aged 28, was still a resident in the camp. He urged the National Assembly to provide for the rights of such persons.

Recommendations for enabling effective refugee participation
The public participation of refugees in the development of Kenya's Refugees Act, 2021[8] revealed four key lessons:

- Refugees come from many countries and speak diverse languages. However, the Bill was only published in English. Translating government policy documents into key languages would allow many more people to read, understand and participate in the review process.

- It is important for refugees to understand the form, extent and purpose of any policy participatory process.[9]

- Non-State actors such as national organisations or refugee-led organisations can be effective in lobbying for recognition, promotion and participation of refugees

in the development of legislation by providing oversight and holding leaders to account.

- Special consideration needs to be given to how to enable minority and marginalised groups within the refugee community to participate in legislative development. All voices are of equal value.

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3. bit.ly/kenya-constitution

4. Kiambu County Government & 3 Others v Robert N. Gakuru & Others [2017] eKLR http://kenyalaw.org/caselaw/cases/view/137956

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8. The 2019 Refugees Bill was signed into law to become the 2021 Refugees Act in November 2021

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Tackling statelessness: the fundamental importance of stateless people's voices

Aleksejs Ivashuk

Enabling stateless people's voices to be heard more strongly and more widely is a fundamental requirement for a better understanding of the problem of statelessness and how to tackle it.

Statelessness affects over ten million people worldwide.[1] A perpetual issue for stateless people[2] and those helping to resolve statelessness is the notable lack of awareness from the world at large about the issue. With limited awareness about it, there is little pressure to pay attention to statelessness. The solution is simple, albeit not easy: there needs to be comprehensive and dedicated awareness-raising on statelessness and, most importantly, stateless people need to be included in discussions on statelessness.

Stateless people must be treated as purposeful participants whose voices matter rather than as mere objects of discussion. Every media article, for example, must include their voice. The same is true for any international projects[3] where decision-making on the direction of these projects must be shared with stateless communities. Every conference on statelessness should involve participants and speakers who are stateless or formerly stateless, and not in a tokenistic way. Yet this is something that has only very recently started to happen and to a limited degree.

The author of this article is himself stateless and is writing after consultation with other stateless people, namely through the Apatride Network. Consultation was also undertaken with members of two leading organisations in the field with which the author is associated, the European Network on Statelessness (ENS) and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI).

Rebalancing imbalances of power

Power imbalances in statelessness directly relate to the common causes of statelessness. Contrary to common understandings, most stateless people today are not refugees but are minorities in their own country,[4] who have been disenfranchised of their rights and left powerless due to antagonism from a more dominant ethnic, racial or religious group. This impacts how statelessness is treated politically.

The Statelessness Determination Procedure (SDP), the process by which stateless people can individually apply for recognition of their status as people who are without a nationality, is a good example of how power imbalances play out. International organisations have a positive impact in helping stateless people with their SDP. However, where States have created or sustained statelessness, the authorities tend to refuse to call statelessness by its name for fear of being held accountable. This deters international organisations from doing humanitarian work on statelessness, such as with SDP, because of the perceived political nature of the subject. Large humanitarian organisations like UNHCR are notoriously weak when it comes to tackling such situations, preferring to avoid stepping on the toes of States at the expense of helping those in need.

In spite of these difficulties, SDP remains important, particularly for stateless people who end up leaving the 'home' country that discriminates against them. It is one of the few existing mechanisms that can help stateless people find their way out of statelessness. More attention needs to be given to SDP, and the relevant authorities need to be trained on SDP and statelessness in general.

The strategy of denying statelessness or refusing to call it by its name has been very successful in keeping statelessness out of the spotlight. The way forward is to encourage people to recognise States' obstruction of

statelessness for what it is. This is a task for the international community, including the humanitarian sector, as well as for domestic actors such as politicians and the media. Successful awareness-raising on statelessness with direct involvement of stateless people's voices and perspectives will help tackle the problem of misinformation. The more stateless people's voices can be heard, the more possible it will be to have an accurate and balanced discussion of statelessness – which is a key first step towards resolving statelessness.

Ultimately, there is a need to bring all sides to the negotiating table. The reluctance usually lies with State actors that are not acting in good faith. International interest can galvanise the attention that is needed. But stateless people too need to be less hesitant and afraid to speak up because of their legal limbo. Those who believe in tackling statelessness can help by providing a safe environment for stateless people to voice their perspective and practise freedom of expression. Without this, we cannot hope to resolve statelessness, at least not fairly.

Fighting disenfranchisement

The real challenge is in how stateless people are disenfranchised in power and politics. At the very root of statelessness are its troubling common causes of xenophobia, racism and sexism. Statelessness is not an accident, nor is it something that anyone deserves. Historically, States have abused their power to decide who can and cannot belong. We need to end this abuse and prevent it from happening in the future.

Discrimination is not only why stateless people become stateless; it is also why they remain so. Statelessness situations across different parts of the world have one prominent aspect in common: victims of statelessness tend to be from disadvantaged groups, such as minorities, who have had their right to nationality compromised because a more dominant group feels animosity toward them. This animosity has various forms. Some countries have sexist nationality policies, such as in refusing to allow mothers to pass on their nationality. This hinders the resolution of existing cases

of statelessness, and often leads to new cases of statelessness, with children continuing to be born into statelessness every day.[5]

The solution is to keep fighting all forms of discrimination and to reinforce relevant regulations, such as those relating to minority, child, gender and migrant rights. Organisations that fight to resolve statelessness can cooperate more closely with anti-discrimination organisations. Influential organisations like the UN can help bridge the gap. Stateless people can help by sharing their own experiences and openly revealing the discrimination and challenges they have faced. Initiatives such as the United Stateless, Statefree and the Apatride Network show how stateless people can come together to tackle statelessness. These stateless-led initiatives not only empower the stateless to be engaged participants but they also provide a valuable piece of the puzzle that bigger organisations like the UN have been missing in their approach to statelessness. These bigger organisations have an important role to play in facilitating a safe and welcoming environment for these initiatives, as shown in current efforts such as ISI's Global Movement on Statelessness and UNHCR's Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

Conclusion

In order to move forward in resolving statelessness, stateless people must be included at the forefront of awareness-raising on the subject. Racism, State obstruction, misinformation and any other forms of discrimination need to be exposed and fought as part of the campaign to end statelessness.

Statelessness is not a marginal issue, nor is it one with a single focus. There are various and multi-faceted forms of statelessness which affect people across the world, including in the West. It makes sense to take small steps toward concrete actions, focusing on one problem at a time, at the same time as trying broad strokes. We must pick our battles carefully and be ready for a long campaign. In that campaign, it would help to have better data, as current data are too unreliable and one-sided (dominated by authorities who have caused statelessness, or

otherwise not inclusive enough of stateless people themselves). It would also help to resolve why the fight to tackle statelessness in general is severely underfunded compared with other human rights issues.

If you would like to help, you can, even just by becoming more familiar with the topic and sharing that knowledge with someone else. We can make the world a better place, one connection at a time. Knowledge is power – and the voices of stateless people need to be the source of that knowledge.

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1. Statelessness is difficult to accurately quantify, presenting a unique set of challenges for statisticians. See Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (2020) *Statelessness in Numbers: 2020* bit.ly/statelessness-numbers and Nahmias P (2020) 'Better statistics to help end statelessness', UNHCR bit.ly/statistics-end-statelessness

2. In international law, a stateless person is someone who is "not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law". UNHCR (2003) *The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons: Implementation within the European Union Member States and Recommendations for Harmonisation* bit.ly/convention-stateless-persons

3. For example, UNHCR's IBelong campaign www.unhcr.org/ibelong/

4. OHCHR (2018) 'Statelessness: A Minority Issue' bit.ly/minority-issue

5. UNHCR (2015) 'The Urgent Need to End Childhood Statelessness' bit.ly/childhood-statelessness

Voice and power at the intersection of art, technology and advocacy

Sahat Zia Hero, Alison Kent, Alexandra Kotowski and Parmin Fatema

Insights from the Rohingya refugee response reveal how art and digital technologies can offer opportunities for refugees and IDPs to lead, advocate and share their voices in forced displacement contexts.

How can the agency of Rohingya refugees and IDPs be more fully embraced as part of responses to their displacement? How can advocacy in such contexts go beyond their voices being 'amplified' by intermediaries, instead enabling Rohingya themselves to steer the narratives and priorities that form the basis of humanitarian interventions and durable solutions? As advocates working with Rohingya communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar, these are questions we reflect on often.

Art and technology are tools to change not just whom we are listening to but also how we are listening: how voices are or are not filtered, how dialogue is framed and constrained, and how this affects what different actors – including humanitarians – hear and ultimately act upon. These may be relatively small elements in the context of the fundamental shifts needed to achieve more equal sharing of resources and power. Nonetheless, we see art and

technology as promising and much needed channels to more fully mobilise shared leadership across humanitarian action.

The Rohingya crisis has been playing out over the course of decades, with multiple cycles of violence, persecution and displacement. Humanitarian actors have responded both to Rohingya that are internally displaced and confined to a series of camps in Rakhine State, Myanmar, and to those who have fled to the sprawling camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Advocacy efforts have tended to be more prominent in Cox's Bazar where, although still constrained, dialogues are more open compared with the camps in Myanmar. These efforts have been important drivers of more participatory approaches to advocacy, grounded in the priorities of Rohingya communities.

Rohingya refugees and IDPs, however, face real barriers to advocating for their rights and raising their voices. Many are still suffering from deep trauma and

are sometimes unsure whom to trust with their stories and how to raise their concerns safely and without repercussions. Many struggle to access education and, without English language skills, are often blocked from opportunities to directly engage with media or decision-makers driving the humanitarian response.

Digital technology

Rohingya leaders and activists in the Cox's Bazar camps have been increasingly at the forefront of using digital technologies to directly engage humanitarian and political decision-makers.

As in many places, the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing access restrictions for international actors accelerated the shift towards increased leadership roles for local organisations and community members. Digital technology has played a crucial enabling role in this shift, from remote data collection and monitoring reliant on capable Rohingya staff, to frontline COVID-19 information campaigns and response led by community members.[1]

Social media in particular has become a space where Rohingya activists interact without their voices being filtered or constrained. Refugee-led groups and individual Rohingya activists have used social media to draw the attention of global audiences to the ongoing crisis, which long ago dropped out of mainstream news headlines. Multiple Twitter accounts managed by Rohingya refugees offer daily insights into the fear, boredom and deprivation of refugees' lives as well as their joys, aspirations and wish to return one day to their homes and homeland.[2]

Twitter has also been strategically leveraged by Rohingya living in camps to enable them to highlight their concerns and discuss their ideas with humanitarian decision-makers. The Rohingya Camp Voice (formerly the RYA Media Team,) for example, is a Twitter account run from the Cox's Bazar camps which documents hazardous areas through photography (flooded walkways, unstable slopes, damaged bridges), tagging the Twitter accounts of

various humanitarian response actors.[3] This approach cuts through traditional feedback and reporting mechanisms. During major floods and fires, refugees in the camps were able to document the scale of the emergency and sound the alarm quickly, while also sharing recommendations for improved response, such as using loudspeakers for fire education purposes. The tagged humanitarian agencies frequently respond to the Rohingya Voice posts, saying they will send teams to investigate conditions.

Rohingya activists and community members have also led coordinated advocacy campaigns on social media. Using the #EducationForAll hashtag on platforms such as YouTube and Twitter, camp-based activists have highlighted the harmful impacts of the authorities' increased restrictions on the community-based schools in the Cox's Bazar camps. Activists have also used the hashtag #GoingHome, to share the continued desire of many Rohingya to have their rights recognised in Myanmar and to return to their homeland.

At various points this advocacy has extended beyond the local humanitarian response. For example, during the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference, refugee photographers in Cox's Bazar shared images of the flooding and natural hazards they were experiencing, tagging the COP26 Twitter account to call for more urgent action from global leaders.[4]

Humanitarian actors, including advocacy staff, are increasingly recognising the value of these spaces to better inform their work. A recent guide published by UNHCR, for instance, explores how social media can be used to monitor protection efforts and serve as a feedback mechanism.[5] Yet important questions remain regarding who has access to social media and what risks they may face. As demonstrated by the promotion of violence and hate speech against the Rohingya on Facebook in Myanmar, social media itself can be used as a tool of exclusion and incitement. Likewise, access to social media often falls along gendered lines in the camps, reflecting the unequal access to resources that many women and girls

"The Life of Rohingya Women in the Refugee Camp" by Mayyu Khan, a 19-year-old artist living in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, was a winning entry in Oxfam International's 2021 Rohingya Arts Competition (Credit: Mayyu Khan)

face – to smartphones, tablets and internet access, as well as to an electricity supply to keep devices charged. For those without access to social media, it is important to consider what alternative opportunities might be supported to enable the same degree of space for advocacy efforts and direct engagement with decision-makers that digital channels can provide.

Arts-based initiatives
The last few years have seen the emergence of a range of arts-based initiatives, including Artolution, the Rohingya Photography Competition, and IOM's Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre, plus exciting Rohingya-led initiatives such as Omar's Film School, the Art Garden Rohingya, and *Rohingyatographer Magazine*.[6] Such efforts are helping to open up more spaces where Rohingya can reflect upon past traumas, critically engage with current issues and directly articulate

their aspirations while exercising agency over narratives and representation.

These arts-focused efforts are not always viewed as 'advocacy initiatives' but nevertheless they can have influence. *Rohingyatographer Magazine*, for example, is a newly launched collaboration of 11 Cox's Bazar-based refugee photographers. The first edition of the magazine explored Rohingya identity through portraits of camp residents, and was displayed at the Liberation War Museum in Dhaka for World Refugee Day 2022 – attracting many high-profile viewers and media attention.[7] Similarly, Oxfam's Rohingya Arts Campaign created the space for Rohingya artists and activists to share their perspectives through poetry, painting, photography, film, creative writing or any other artistic medium.[8] Strong advocacy points were raised through the different creative pieces featured online – the need for meaningful justice and accountability

processes, the importance of access to education for displaced adolescent girls, the continued desire of Rohingyas to return to their homeland and the unaddressed traumas of past violence and ongoing exile. While some artists submitted creative writing pieces in English, others shared traditional Rohingya folk songs or expressed their views through visual arts, breaking through language barriers to reach a global audience. Many artists used their creative pieces not just to explore their own perspectives but also to advocate for their community as a whole, paying particular attention to how existing barriers to services such as education can be addressed and participation more fully supported. By sharing immediate and unfiltered perspectives of the experience and views of people in the camps, these initiatives produce knowledge that engages decision-makers in a way that would not previously have been possible.

Photography and photojournalism in particular are areas where Rohingya are increasingly taking a leading role in framing their lives and narratives. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Bangladeshi government drastically reduced permits to enter the Cox's Bazar refugee camps, including for foreign journalists. Rohingya journalists stepped in to fill that space, providing high-quality photos to be published by international media and NGOs.[9] Rohingya photojournalists who had traditionally been uncredited were suddenly in the spotlight. Additionally, refugee photographers felt that they were able to capture more nuanced portraits of the refugee community, moving away from the heavy focus on disaster and tragedy to more complex perspectives on refugee capacity and resilience.

Conclusion

Art-based initiatives and digital technologies are tools which are not without risks and limitations, but many individuals and agencies – including ourselves – have experimented with using them as channels for change in terms of whose voices and knowledge are placed at the centre and, ultimately, who has access to power and decision-making. Both have proved valuable in enabling Rohingya activists and humanitarians to promote alternative narratives and to have a more direct dialogue with decision-makers. This has pushed our collective advocacy work forward, broadened our alliances and fostered important connections, including collaboration on this article itself, which came about through us meeting on Twitter.

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1. bit.ly/covid-Cox-Bazar

2. bit.ly/covid-Cox-Bazar See for example: @SahatZia_Hero, @Rohingya_Camp, @MainulI39525825, @RoAnamulHasan1

3. See @Rohingya_Camp

4. bit.ly/jamal-photography-tweet

5. UNHCR (2021) *Using Social Media in Community-Based Protection: A Guide* bit.ly/UNHCR-social-media

6. See Omar's Film School, IOM's Cultural Memory Centre, Rohingya Photography Competition, Art Garden Rohingya and Field Photography Collective.

7. See www.rohingyatographer.org. The first issue was covered by publications including Al Jazeera, NBC News, and Lacuna Magazine.

8. https://www.oxfam.org/en/rohingyaart

9. See for example NRC bit.ly/NRC-eid-celebrations; Al Jazeera bit.ly/Aljazeera-fatal-floods; the Guardian bit.ly/Guardian-rebuild-camps; and Reuters https://reut.rs/3zvdMm9

Self-representation of Syrian refugees in the media in Turkey and Germany

Sefa Secen

Refugees are increasingly creating alternative news media platforms in order to better represent their own perspectives.

When three young Syrian workers were burned to death at a factory in Izmir in Western Turkey, the racist attack was not featured in Turkey's main media outlets, and only became known 35 days after the incident when documented by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.[1] In another incident, Anas Modamani, a Syrian refugee in Germany, was photographed by the media when taking a selfie with Chancellor Angela Merkel. Based on a weak physical resemblance, Modamani was later wrongly claimed by the media to be one of the perpetrators of the suicide bombings in Brussels carried out by the Islamic State group. The selfie was circulated widely on social media and incorporated into a national security narrative that associated refugees with terrorism.

In an attempt to gain agency over their own narratives (and thereby to influence policies affecting them), Syrian refugees began to create alternative independent digital media platforms. On these platforms,[2] Syrians play an active role in collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news about the events and issues that involve or concern them in host countries. Although mainstream media portrayals often focus on the economic, social and political consequences of hosting Syrian refugees, refugee-run media bring to light the policies and practices of host countries that lead to isolation, alienation and discrimination. Of course, the mere existence of refugee-run media does not necessarily lead to the democratisation of the discourse on refugees. These platforms lack the power, authority and visibility that mainstream outlets have in shaping public imagination. Furthermore, the perspectives presented in refugee-run media often do not get picked up by the mainstream media.

Turkey and Germany offer interesting insights into how refugee-run media platforms function. Both countries host large Syrian refugee populations, with Turkey hosting around 3.6 million Syrian refugees and Germany hosting around 800,000 Syrian refugees. Turkey and Germany are the two countries in which we see perhaps the greatest level of demographic diversity within the Syrian refugee population, as well as the best examples of self-representation in various media outlets. Syrian journalists have been more active and vocal about the issues that concern them in these countries than in other Syrian refugee-hosting countries such as Lebanon and Jordan.

Refugee-run media in Turkey

Refugee-run media platforms in Turkey concentrate on several policy areas in their coverage, including:

The implications of Temporary Protection Status (TPS): Syrian refugee media activists argue that granting TPS, the legal status granted to Syrian refugees in Turkey, indicates that the State views the refugees' presence as a temporary condition and expects refugees to return to Syria in the near future.[3]

The government's social integration policies and programmes: Launched by the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), the principal authority responsible for overall migration and international protection affairs in Turkey, these programmes are criticised as they only involve Syrians, whereas they should also engage Turkish citizens at the local, regional and national levels.

The dangers of political exploitation of Syrian refugee issues: A strategy adopted

by political actors to achieve electoral gains or consolidate power in Turkey.

The myths circulated about refugees in mainstream media and racist attacks towards refugees: In a context of economic crisis in Turkey, these myths mostly focus on the costs of hosting refugees and shape public perceptions. For example, hate speech by Turks toward Syrian refugees escalated in 2020 as Syrian refugees were increasingly presented as the major cause of the dire economic conditions and lack of job opportunities in the country.[4]

Refugee-run media in Germany

Refugee-run media in Germany has focused on a different set of issues, which include:

The limitations of the subsidiary protection status awarded to Syrian refugees: Between September 2015 and February 2016, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees offered Syrians refugee status, granting full protection for three years as well as travel documents. Syrians were also eligible to apply for family reunification. However, the German government introduced a set of more restrictive rules in February 2016. Under these new rules, Syrians were granted subsidiary protection instead of conventional refugee status, allowing them to obtain residency for one year only and requiring them to wait two years to apply for family reunification. Additionally, family reunification was suspended altogether between mid-2016 and 2018. Refugee-run media worked to raise awareness of these rules by illustrating the impacts of these policies on refugees' lives, such as separation, isolation and discrimination.

The consequences of lifting the ban on the deportation of refugees: The deportation ban was not renewed in December 2020, meaning that refugees convicted of serious crimes could now be forced to return to Syria. The illegal deportation of some Afghan refugees to war-torn Afghanistan in recent years aggravated fears among Syrian refugees.

Wider issues in German society: In an attempt to disrupt the presentation of refugees primarily as receivers of aid, protection and sympathy, the platforms also chose to give space and visibility to events in which Syrians acted as providers instead. For example, moved by images of devastating floods in southwest Germany, thousands of Syrian refugees (organised through social media) travelled to the region and provided aid and assistance.[5] This was given extensive coverage in the Syrian refugee-run media in Germany.

Conclusion

In general, refugees' perspectives and stories hardly figure in the mainstream media. But as the means of mass media content production have become widely available through increased internet access, refugees have been able to develop the skills needed to disrupt the politics of representation and to influence policymaking in host countries – albeit to a limited extent. The quest for self-representation does not only help restore agency and a sense of community among refugees but also mitigates the influence of media cultures that prioritise the perspectives of external observers as opposed to the perspectives and lived experiences of the individuals or groups observed. Mainstream media news reporting has contributed to the perception of refugees as a threat to the cultural, economic, and political security of host countries. The incorporation of refugee-run media platforms into the refugee-related news ecosystem can help capture a diversity of perspectives and provide a more balanced view of refugees.

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1. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (2021) 'Three Syrian workers burned to death in İzmir in racist attack' bit.ly/Syrian-workers-attack

2. Such as *enab baladi, almodon, intsyria, abwad, aljumhuriya, dubarah,* and *freedomraise*

3. Enab Baladi (2021) 'Who bridges the gap between the Turks and Syrian refugees?' bit.ly/turkey-syria-refugees

4. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (2020) 'A Comparative Study on Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media - Second Monitoring Round 2020' bit.ly/Syrian-media-study

5. For example, www.abwab.eu

Meaningful representation starts at the top: refugees on UNHCR's ExCom

Bahati Kanyamanza and Emily Arnold-Fernandez

Refugee representatives should form 50% of UNHCR's Executive Committee to ensure that the UN Refugee Agency is governed by the people it exists to serve.

I, Bahati Kanyamanza, have been a refugee for 22 years. When I came of age in a refugee camp in Uganda, I wondered whether the State of Uganda or the State of my birth – the Democratic Republic of Congo – was responsible for representing me in global fora. I learned that, in practice, neither State represented me. Yet UNHCR, the international body charged with leading the world's response to forced migration, is not governed by those who are forced to migrate. Instead, it is governed by an Executive Committee ('ExCom') entirely composed of States.

My co-author Emily Arnold-Fernández and I believe now is the time to change this. Calls for equitable, inclusive governance at all levels are echoing across the globe. Humanitarian actors from States to UN bodies to civil society groups are assessing progress in implementing the World Humanitarian Summit's Grand Bargain commitment to localisation – the idea that those closest to challenges must play a central role in designing solutions.[1]

A moral imperative – and essential for solutions

In 2016, I served as a co-facilitator for the Global Refugee Youth Consultations (GRYC): UNHCR's programme to better understand the needs, desires and challenges of refugee youth, as well as their ideas for solutions. A common theme emerged from these consultations: *You plan for us without us – and you do not know us*. The message from refugee youth to UNHCR and other forced migration stakeholders was simple: *If you want to solve our problems, first engage with us and involve us*.

At its core, deciding the fate of refugees without their involvement is unethical. As those most affected by forced migration, refugees are entitled to have a central voice in decision-making structures. Yet across the globe refugees are marginalised in the governance, design and implementation of forced migration responses, at local, national, regional and international levels.

This marginalisation also impedes solutions. When refugees do not meaningfully participate, forced migration responses overlook important priorities, fails to understand critical needs, and breeds mistrust between refugees and the entities that ostensibly support or represent them. The results can be disastrous.

For example, between 2000 and 2005, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed maize to the 50,000 refugees living in Kyangwali Settlement, where I also used to live. Refugees in Kyangwali, however, were already growing maize, aiming to sell it so they could support their families. When WFP flooded the market with free maize, prices plunged and thousands of kilos of maize grown by refugees were left to rot. This could have been avoided if refugees had been represented on those decision-making bodies that determined refugees' needs and planned how to respond.

Since the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 and the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants in September that same year, refugee participation in displacement responses has become widely accepted as morally and pragmatically necessary – although this does not always translate into practice. The 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) explicitly names refugees as stakeholders in designing shared solutions to the challenges of forced displacement. The rallying cry *Nothing about us without us* has become increasingly common as refugee-led organisations (RLOs) and networks have emerged as significant voices over the past

five years in global conversations about refugees. Civil society has begun to put theory into practice, for example by implementing recommendations in the Global Refugee-led Network's Meaningful Participation Guidelines[2] and using the Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative fund to drive resources to RLOs.[3] However, States and UNHCR – entities with much greater power in forced displacement responses – have fallen behind in instituting refugee participation in their decision-making.

Representation at the top

Like most (but not all) international institutions, UNHCR's ExCom is made up entirely of States. The logic behind this structure is that States represent the interests of their citizens – but for refugees, this logic does not apply. A refugee is a person whose State has failed them. The government of their country of origin either threatens to persecute them or has failed in its core obligation to them, in that it cannot or will not protect them from persecution, war or a serious breakdown in public order. To claim that a State of origin is competent to represent a refugee in international decision-making, after failing its far more basic duty of protection, is laughable.

At the same time, refugees who are most affected by UNHCR's actions are not citizens of the countries where they reside. They do not have the right to vote. They rarely have equal rights with citizens in regard to other forms of democratic participation, and in some places are interned or detained without access to anyone who might represent their interests in civic spaces. Moreover, most States that host significant refugee populations consider them as temporary guests; indeed, the GCR contains almost no reference to integration within a host country, and in practice few hosting countries allow integration or provide a clear and easy pathway to citizenship or other means of obtaining voting rights.

Most host country governments do not believe themselves obligated to represent the refugees who have sought refuge within their borders. Indeed, both in the course of discussions on forced displacement and

in their actions, host countries routinely and publicly assert that their duty to represent their citizens requires them to resist measures aiming to "improve the situation of refugees", apply "international conventions for the protection of refugees" and "promote…assimilation…and admission of refugees".[4] These are all central elements of UNHCR's mandate, which the agency's Executive Committee is charged to oversee.

The conclusion is inescapable: refugees cannot rely on their host State to represent them. Until and unless a refugee obtains a new citizenship, they are not represented by any State – and thus will have no representation in ExCom unless that body is restructured to include refugee representatives.

ILO: a precedent for refugee representation

Fortunately, an alternative structure – adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) – could serve as a model for redesigning UNHCR's ExCom. The ILO tripartite governance structure allows for direct representation of the two populations most directly affected by ILO decisions: workers and their employers. Workers and employers together comprise 50% of ILO's Governing Body (the equivalent to UNHCR's ExCom), as well as 50% of its other component bodies such as the ILO Conference.

ILO's rationale for this structure is to give "equal voice to workers, employers and governments to ensure" that workers' and employers' views are "closely reflected" in "shaping policies and programmes".[5] If we substitute 'refugees' for 'workers' and 'employers' above, we see that the ILO model is built on the exact principles that have come to be widely accepted as a necessary foundation for forced displacement responses. For UNHCR to retain relevance and moral authority, it must now build a revised governance structure similar to that of ILO.

Proposals for refugee representation in global decision-making sometimes face resistance based on a concern that refugee representation networks are not perfectly democratic. Beyond the absurdity in applying this argument to ExCom – because States are

Alejandra Macías Delgadillo, Executive Director of Asylum Access Mexico, speaking at a hearing at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington D.C., 2019 (Credit: Asylum Access)

not perfectly democratic either – the ILO's model offers a simple, pragmatic way of overcoming this argument: ILO's non-state representatives are selected "in agreement with the most representative national organizations of employers and workers" respectively.[6] With the rise of active RLOs and networks worldwide, the organisational structures needed to select representatives fairly already exist. And with today's plethora of free digital communication and interpretation tools, widespread participation in selection processes is easily achievable. UNHCR's ExCom could thus easily replicate ILO's approach, with refugee representatives selected nationally or regionally.

Our proposal for ExCom

We believe any proposal for refugee representation on ExCom should be generated through an inclusive process that involves refugees around the world. Here we offer a few initial ideas for what such a proposal might include, as a means of

sparking thinking and dialogue by those with lived experience of forced displacement and others who work with and for them.

Equitable representation: Refugee representatives should be equitably represented on UNHCR's ExCom, comprising 50% of the body, with States comprising the other 50%. Fifty percent representation is in line with the ILO model and ensures that refugees have a true voice on ExCom; anything less would mean that those most affected by the decisions being made could be outvoted by others.

Selection by refugees: Refugee representatives must be selected by refugees themselves, not by States or UNHCR. States should not be involved in deciding which refugees are the most appropriate representatives. If States must provide formal credentials for all representatives to all UN bodies, then any new appointment procedures for refugee representation

should include a provision requiring States to automatically provide credentials to any refugee representative selected.

Diverse representation: It is important to ensure adequate representation of diverse displacement experiences. While there are many ways to achieve diversity of representation, a few ideas that might be explored include: a) Inviting each regional refugee-led network to nominate a certain number of representatives. This would have the advantage of allowing each network to devise its own selection process, rather that prescribing a set process for all regions. b) Allocating representative seats proportionally by host country refugee population. For example, in a country with a population of three million refugees, this population might select nine refugee representatives while a refugee population of one million might have three representatives. Smaller refugee populations might rotate the selection of a representative among themselves. c) For each State that participates in ExCom, a corresponding refugee representative residing in that State is selected. All of these options have benefits and flaws that should be discussed and debated alongside other options not mentioned here.

There are already a number of regional refugee-led networks, such as RELON in Africa and APNOR in the Asia-Pacific region, which are collectively organised into a global meta-network, the Global Refugee-led Network.[7] The members of these regional networks are refugee-led organisations that are deeply embedded in and trusted by their communities. Together, all these entities comprise a participatory governance infrastructure that could take up the challenge of selecting and equipping refugee representatives as UNHCR ExCom members.

Before this can happen, however, the UN General Assembly must pass a resolution requesting that the UN Economic and Social Council revise Resolution 672 (VVX) – the resolution that established UNHCR's ExCom – to allow for refugee representatives. We believe equitable representation of refugees cannot wait: the time for this change is now.

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1. bit.ly/grand-bargain

2. Global Refugee-led Network (2019) *Meaningful Participation Guidelines as Transformative Leadership: Guidelines for Concrete Action* bit.ly/refugee-participation-guidelines

3. Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative 'Apply for a Grant' https://www.refugeeslead.org/apply

4. UNHCR *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* article 8 bit.ly/UNHCR-statute

5. ILO 'About the ILO' bit.ly/about-ILO

6. ILO 'International Labour Conference' bit.ly/ILO-conference

7. https://globalrefugeenetwork.org

Not just a seat at the table: refugee participation and the importance of listening

Tristan Harley, Suyeon Lee and Najeeba Wazefadost

The 2019 Global Refugee Forum was significant for its inclusion of refugee representatives. There is much to be learnt by paying close attention to the speeches they gave – that is, by really listening to their voices.

In December 2019, UNHCR convened the first ever Global Refugee Forum (GRF), bringing together over 3,000 participants to consider new approaches to addressing refugee protection and solutions globally. One of the most celebrated aspects of the Forum was the novel inclusion of refugee representatives, with 70 refugees from 22 countries of origin and 30 host countries. Furthermore, refugee representatives gave speeches on nearly all the panels convened at the event. After the event, UNHCR reflected that "[t]he pivotal role of refugees, both in preparing for and participating in the GRF … demonstrated the importance of keeping refugees at the centre of matters that relate to their lives and futures", setting an "important precedent" and serving as "a model for future good practice".[1]

Although comprising only 2% of total participants, this inclusion of refugee representatives in the GRF responded to the calls from refugee communities for greater inclusion and marks the most concerted attempt yet by UNHCR and States to actively incorporate the views of refugees at in-person, high-level, intergovernmental dialogues. While recent historical analysis has revealed that refugees played a fundamental role in the development of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the early years of UNHCR's work, refugees have not been seen by States and others as a legitimate, independent stakeholder.[2] More recently, refugee representatives participated in the formal and informal consultations leading up to the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR),[3] although this participation was less prominent than the participation of refugees at the GRF.

So far, most attention regarding the participation of refugees at the GRF has focused on the numbers and diversity of refugees present. Yet far less attention has been directed to the speeches delivered by these refugee representatives, which have ongoing relevance for the international refugee regime. This article teases out some of the key messages and insights raised by these advocates, along with some of their suggestions for reform. The article also encourages readers to engage directly with each of the 64 speeches made, which are available as a complete bibliography with weblinks for each of the recordings.[4]

Self-identification

When listening to refugees speak at the inaugural GRF, it becomes apparent that the speakers introduced themselves in several distinct ways. Notably, this self-identification did not always align with the labels and descriptors given to the speakers in the Forum programme. While many speakers self-identified as refugees and former refugees (and in some cases were explicitly proud of this identity), others were apprehensive about the label of 'refugee' and how it has affected their access to basic rights in host countries. Felix Sesay, a Refugee Co-sponsor[5] of the event, noted that it was challenging to be labelled a refugee as it meant he could not access education when he sought protection in Ghana. Hina Shikhani likewise expressed her determination not to let "any label restrict my capabilities and my potential" when she sought to attend higher education as an Afghan refugee woman in Pakistan.

Several speakers emphasised the humanity of displaced persons and sought to frame refugee protection within a broader human rights discourse. Former Rohingya

refugee Azizah Noor highlighted, for example, that "[r]efugees are human too. Every single person on this earth has human rights". Afghan refugee Hina Shikhani shared this call for equal treatment by sharing a quote from an unnamed refugee poet: "What if I am a refugee? I am human too".

Other speakers self-identified as human rights defenders. Andrea Ayala introduced themself as a lawyer, lesbian, non-binary person and a human rights defender. They spoke of the importance of meaningful refugee participation and the need to address barriers to gender equality and bring forward the voices of refugee women and girls. Tina and Renee Dixson similarly described their roles as human rights defenders and advocates for the rights of displaced LGBTIQ+ people.

This self-identification of refugee speakers as human rights defenders is notable because it legitimises in a different form the right of these advocates to participate in decision-making fora. As the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1998 reaffirms, "[e]veryone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels".[6]

Representation

Another key observation from the speeches is the wide diversity among the speakers as to who they sought to represent. Some speakers spoke on behalf of established representative organisations and networks, either as elected spokespersons or as founders or members. This included several speakers connected to the Global Refugee-led Network (founded in 2018 to facilitate greater refugee self-representation in international policymaking) and the Global Youth Advisory Council (established by UNHCR in 2017 to enhance its work with and for refugee youth). The emergence of these initiatives has demonstrated the feasibility and necessity of refugee participation in international law and policy dialogues. This participation has debunked inaccurate and outdated assumptions that

refugees are either too vulnerable, unskilled or otherwise unable to participate.[7]

Several speakers identified their participation as being a symbolic representation of the world's refugees. Susan Grace Duku, for example, noted: "I feel the burden and responsibility on my shoulders… to speak today, on behalf of … refugees across the globe". Melika Sheik-Eldin similarly articulated that "today we are not talking about ourselves. We are talking about the millions of refugees… who… do not have a voice". Her speech focused on the needs of older refugee women experiencing sexual and gender-based violence who are often excluded from discussions on refugee protection.

For others, their participation was strongly connected to a particular refugee community. Azizah Noor indicated that she found herself "holding the voices of Rohingyan women who have faced unimaginable atrocities in a place I once called home. This includes systematic rape, torture, and the murder of family and friends". Andrea Ayala sought to draw attention to the plight of individuals unable to participate. "You see me", Ayala stated, "but I need you to see Camila, who was a 26-year-old trans woman from El Salvador… Camila got her asylum claim denied by the US government, and she returned to El Salvador. She was murdered by police officers just a couple of days after she returned".

Lastly, other speakers highlighted the challenges of representation itself, both within refugee communities and with wider stakeholders. Many refugee leaders recognise the need to ensure diversity within the communities they represent. As Charles Burikumaso Nsenga shared, "As a man, I cannot know all of the needs of the different spheres and sectors of the community". Mustafa Alio suggested that there was a double standard when stakeholders challenged the representativeness of refugee leaders or refugee groups: "It is an excuse a lot of people use: 'Who do you represent and why do you have to participate?'". Alio, the first appointed refugee advisor to the Canadian government, emphasised that "meaningful participation is a process that will take time and effort" and highlighted the

need for external stakeholders to support the process of increasing representation within refugee-led initiatives. This support could include financial assistance and skills training for participatory activities and elections, or advocacy and law reform to remove some of the barriers to participation that refugees face.

Key messages

One of the elements that distinguished the speeches of refugees from those of other stakeholders at the GRF was the common use of personal narrative. Refugees often recounted their lived experiences of displacement and leveraged these accounts to highlight problems with the international refugee regime. Furthermore, they shared local, regional and global examples of best practice. These included the development of refugee-led initiatives, collaborative projects with host governments and civil society organisations, and scholarship programmes that they had benefited from. Beyond this, refugee speakers also proposed actionable policy recommendations directed towards UN Member States, humanitarian actors and UNHCR. These recommendations addressed multiple dimensions of displacement, with the most prominent ones relating to education; addressing the needs of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ communities; and the meaningful participation of refugees in decision-making.

In relation to education, many speakers stressed the need to expand tertiary education scholarship opportunities for refugees. They also highlighted the importance of integrating refugee children into national education systems and scaling up remote access to education in camp and rural settings. Speakers emphasised the need to provide equal access to opportunities for refugee women, girls, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community and to advocate for their specific needs within policy responses. For example, Tina Dixson highlighted the need for "better policies on refugee determination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics". She also called on the audience to address the "intentional silencing and erasure of LGBTIQ refugees" from policy discussions

and documents, noting the lack of any reference to LGBTIQ+ refugees in the GCR.

Lastly, several speakers expressed the importance of normalising diverse, inclusive and sustained refugee participation across a range of decision-making areas. For example, the Global Refugee-led Network's closing statement articulated concrete proposals to enhance meaningful participation of refugees and host communities in decisions that affect their lives. First, they called on UNHCR and other stakeholders to support the establishment of at least one refugee observer seat on the Executive Committee and Standing Committee of UNHCR. Second, they advocated for UNHCR and regional institutions to work with refugee representatives to establish a refugee-led advisory body that would inform protection responses at a regional level. Third, they called on all stakeholders to increase monetary and non-monetary resources to support refugee-led participation. Significantly, these reform proposals emerged from consultations with refugees and refugee-led networks held in six regions (North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Middle East and Asia Pacific) prior to the Forum.

Listening and responding to refugees

Enabling meaningful refugee participation is not just about giving refugees an opportunity to express their voice at major international conferences. It is as importantly about how other stakeholders listen and respond to these voices. Are the institutions and fora themselves properly designed to enable appropriate listening to the views of forcibly displaced persons? Are the views of refugee advocates taken seriously and considered appropriately? For refugee participation to be meaningful, both individuals and institutions must adapt the ways in which we listen and respond.

For individuals, appropriate listening requires engaging with the speaker's message on its own terms, and not just feeling and expressing sympathy with the speaker's hardship or personal experiences. For institutions, facilitating appropriate

listening involves establishing suitable fora and mechanisms, both physical and virtual. This includes properly recording what was said, providing considered responses to reform proposals, and leaving space for reflection and for alternative ideas to arise. Any truly deliberative procedure has unpredictable outcomes and must support a form of participation that is open to an outcome which the powerholders may not favour.[8] While the 2019 GRF was a significant step forward in terms of the way it included refugee representatives, more attention needs to be paid to how we listen and respond to refugees in policy discussions such as these.

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1. UNHCR (2020) *Outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum* bit.ly/GRF-outcomes; UNHCR (2020) *Summary of Participation and Pledges at the Global Refugee Forum* bit.ly/GRF-participation-pledges

2. Harley T (2021) 'Refugee Participation Revisited: The Contributions of Refugees to Early International Refugee Law and Policy', Refugee Survey Quarterly issue 40 bit.ly/participation-revisited

3. See Bahram H (2020) 'Between Tokenism and Self-Representation: Refugee-Led Advocacy and Inclusion in International Refugee Policy' bit.ly/tokenism-self-representation

4. 'Speaking from Experience: A Complete Bibliography of the Speeches Made by Refugees and Persons with Lived Experiences of Displacement at the 2019 Inaugural Global Refugee Forum' bit.ly/speeches-bibliography-GRF

5. UNHCR 'Refugee Co-Sponsors' bit.ly/refugee-co-sponsors

6. United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms bit.ly/UN-declaration

7. The Global Refugee-led Network (2022) *Power and The Margins: The State of Refugee Participation* bit.ly/power-margins

8. Andrew Dobson explores this idea in his book *Listening for Democracy: Recognition, Representation, Reconciliation*

Shifting power in forced displacement: the need for internal organisational change

Sana Mustafa, Deepa Nambiar and Rahul Balasundaram

Organisational learning, commitment and action focusing on both refugee leadership and localisation are essential if there is to be a shift of power in the forced displacement sector.

Increasingly, global actors recognise that those with lived experience of forced displacement and their host community allies are sustainably and cost-effectively driving holistic, community-driven solutions in refugee-hosting communities. However, those with lived experience and their allies are too often excluded in the current humanitarian and development system and are least likely to receive financial support or be included in key strategising and decision-making processes.

UNHCR enshrined their commitment to the meaningful participation of refugees within the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees and continues to promote this objective, such as during the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in 2019 and the follow-up High-Level Officials Meeting in 2021. Many international NGOs appeared to follow suit by signing up to the Global Refugee-led Network's participation pledge (which aims to promote refugee-led organisations (RLOs)) and by increasing the representation of refugee speakers at their public-facing events. There has also been an emphasis on accelerating localisation over the last few years, such as at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 when humanitarian organisations and donors committed to

providing at least 25% of humanitarian funding directly to local and national organisations through the Grand Bargain.[1]

However, these commitments have not materialised. Despite pledges towards localisation, the percentage of humanitarian funding directly provided to local and national actors actually decreased from 2.8% in 2017 to 1.2% in 2021.[2] Even more striking, we estimate that of the US$31.3 billion in the global humanitarian system, less than 1% of funding goes directly to RLOs.[3] Moreover, despite UNHCR's commitment to the meaningful participation of refugees, fewer than 3% of the over 3000 attendees at the GRF in 2019 were refugees.[4]

The failures of these commitments are not surprising given current practices and power dynamics within our sector. For example, while we increasingly hear of interest in funding and partnering with local organisations (including RLOs) we see a continuing expectation that those partners will conform to standards of practice common within professional 'white dominant culture', which we define as ways that the norms, preferences and fears of white European-descended people overwhelmingly shape our work and institutions, the way we see and interact with ourselves and each other, and how we make decisions.[5] For example, these might include fluency in English, linear thinking and timeline-driven activities. When, inevitably, local partners cannot or will not subscribe to these ways of working, international actors revert to reliance on well-trodden paths. These practices primarily reflect the interests of the international partner, such as sub-contractual arrangements, short-term funding that stymies organisational development, and short-term collaborations with local partners which lack transparency and accountability.

Commitment to internal change: a precondition to shifting power

Our sector must acknowledge, unpack and address the power dynamics that permit international actors to dictate the rules of the game. By engaging with leaders in the Global Refugee-led Network, Network for

Refugee Voices, Adeso Africa and the NEAR Network, since 2018 Asylum Access has identified the critical role that we ourselves can and need to play to begin to shift power to local actors and support the refugee leadership and localisation agendas.

In our journey during the past few years, Asylum Access has found that the necessary precondition for shifting power in the forced displacement sector is a commitment to internal organisational change and ongoing learning focusing on refugee leadership and localisation. To work toward these commitments, we have learned that we must commit to three broad areas.

1. Understanding power dynamics

Firstly, to rectify systemic imbalances within refugee response, we must familiarise ourselves with the historical and ongoing power dynamics present in our sector. The disconnect between international actors' commitments (to localise and elevate refugee leadership) and the reality (that many remain unwilling or unsure how to give up power, control, visibility and space) is predominantly rooted in our sector's colonial past and ongoing structural racism. Many current practices and attitudes derive from the colonial era: aid flows from former colonial powers to formerly colonised regions; pervasive terminology such as 'capacity-building' paints non-white populations as lacking skill; pay scales privilege foreigners over local staff for doing similar work in the same locations; and funding is most often accessed by a small number of prominent actors who have existing relationships with donors.

The starting point to shifting these deep-rooted attitudes and practices is investing in internal knowledge-building in topics such as the prominence of white supremacy, white saviourism and white dominant professional culture in our sector, and the history of colonialism and ongoing neocolonialism in the wider forced displacement, humanitarian and international development systems. At Asylum Access we have a committed budget to support training in these key areas to increase awareness and knowledge internally;

we regularly hold workshops on anti-racism and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for staff and board members; and we are working towards developing transparent and inclusive decision-making processes. We have also committed further professional development funds to support these processes.

Our learning in these areas has enabled us to change how we work. For example, instead of wrongly assuming local partners 'lack' capacity or expertise, we approach them with the understanding that they have the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences but often lack the resources to strengthen their organisations and expand their projects and programmes. This simple shift in approach results in building partnerships that promote mutual knowledge-sharing, capacity-strengthening and overall impact instead of the perpetuation of one-way, top-down dynamics that prevail in current partnerships.

2. Investing in refugee leadership, anti-racism and DEI

Investment in refugee leadership, local leadership, anti-racism and DEI internally is imperative to shifting power in our sector. Organisations should re-examine their leadership, governance and staffing structures to ensure those with proximate knowledge and experience are part of our teams and increasingly dictating the direction of the organisation. At Asylum Access we launched a process to name, analyse and update our strategic and budgetary decision-making practices, with the explicit intention to share power equitably between leadership staff who work in our global headquarters and those who work in the national organisations that make up the Asylum Access family.

We have also taken a deeper look at how to increase the representation of those with lived experience of forced displacement within our organisation. As a result, we have significantly changed our recruitment practices, to ensure people who have experienced forced displacement are always involved in hiring processes and that other staff understand the value of lived experience when making hiring decisions. We have also set internal targets on the

representation of staff with lived experience of forced displacement. Additionally, we began using simultaneous translation more regularly, to ensure that those who do not speak English with native fluency can still communicate nuanced concepts and inform organisational direction.

Externally, we have learned the importance of assessing our power and added value in relation to partners, especially local civil society actors, including RLOs. These reflections have helped us to better identify the best role for us in any given partnership, whether that is co-leading, supporting or standing aside entirely. By investing in refugee leadership, local leadership, anti-racism and DEI within our headquarters and national organisations, we will be better equipped to recognise, celebrate and leverage cultural differences and unique experiences both internally and with partners. In turn, this will enable us to better incorporate real measures of impact based on long-term transformative outcomes that shift power toward refugees and local actors.

3. Recognising and implementing trauma-informed practice and engagement

Equitable partnerships are founded on co-design, co-leadership, co-visibility, and trust and transparency with local actors, particularly refugees and RLOs.[6] An important foundation is for organisations to recognise and implement trauma-informed practice and engagement. The systemic exclusion of local actors has resulted in significant amounts of trauma for individuals and organisations with lived experience of forced displacement. The following principles can ensure appropriate trauma-informed engagement: ensuring the safety of all stakeholders; upholding transparency in decision-making processes; valuing lived experience and first-hand knowledge to foster collaboration and mutual benefit; leveraging the strengths of individuals and communities affected by forced displacement; and acknowledging the ongoing impact of historical trauma to challenge systemic and institutional oppression that perpetuates trauma.[7]

Lessons learned and ways forward

We have learned two main lessons during our short yet significant journey toward shifting power internally at Asylum Access.

First, creating genuine and transformative change on a personal, interpersonal and organisational level requires deep commitment from leadership within all levels of the organisation. This includes identifying internal champions on the Board and among the staff; developing a co-designed process between the board and the organisation; and committing a significant amount of energy, time and resources to the ongoing learning and unlearning process.

Second, the process of creating internal change is difficult, and efforts toward practising inclusion and addressing power dynamics in all elements of our work may be expensive and time-consuming. The extra steps taken on this front (such as arranging for translation, organising meetings across time zones, allocating staff time to co-design agendas, and obtaining everyone's sign-off) can mistakenly be considered 'inefficient', in particular within organisations dominated by white professional culture. However, our experience has revealed that investments in time and resources toward internal change result in improved communication and trust and in partnerships that genuinely leverage the unique skills of those with lived experience of forced displacement and local communities to bring about long-term change.[8]

Internal changes in international organisations not only signal a powerful commitment towards equity and inclusion but also lay the foundation for shifting power across the forced displacement sector. However, internal commitments and actions must not fall into the trap of repeating one-time, tokenistic efforts in the hope of resolving systemic challenges. Investments in internal change over time will be reflected not only in more ethical, effective and sustainable projects but also in how we approach these projects and our overall ways of working.

There is a growing movement toward refugee leadership and localisation, and to genuinely demonstrate solidarity with these movements, we must fundamentally transform the way we operate as international organisations. We must invest significant energy, time and resources in internal change and hold ourselves consistently accountable to these commitments. We are therefore at a crossroads. Do we want to perpetuate the systemic inequities rooted in colonialism by accepting the status quo? Or do we want to reimagine a new system in which access, power, resources and decision-making are genuinely in the hands of refugees and people with lived experience of forced displacement – by first starting with our own organisations?

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1. bit.ly/grand-bargain

2. Development Initiatives (2022) *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report* bit.ly/humanitarian-assistance-report

3. This figure is estimated using the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2022; we then consulted with RLO partners around the world, who confirm that this is a reasonable estimation.

4 UNHCR (2020). *The Global Refugee Forum at a Glance* bit.ly/GRF-glance

5. See Cuyahoga Arts & Culture bit.ly/white-dominant-culture

6. Asylum Access (2021). *Building Equitable Partnerships: Shifting Power in Forced Displacement* bit.ly/equitable-partnerships

7. Health & Medicine Policy Research Group (2019). *Trauma-Informed Policymaking Tool* bit.ly/trauma-informed-policymaking

8. We have seen this first-hand at Asylum Access through our $10 million award-winning initiative, the Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative (RRLI), in which we convened a coalition of five RLOs working toward transferring ownership and resources to RLOs across the globe.

Language, power and voice in monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning: a checklist for practitioners

Daniel Davies and Emily Elderfield

Frameworks for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning need to take into account what languages people use, how they prefer to access information, and what words participants understand and are comfortable with.

Insufficient attention to language barriers systematically excludes many marginalised groups[1] from decision-making, essential services and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) frameworks. Displaced people who do not speak or understand the majority languages used in their host communities are less likely to be able to communicate their own needs and priorities effectively. More generally, they are less likely to obtain the information they need to access services and make decisions, or to report abuse. Unless humanitarian practitioners are sensitive to the impact of language on power and voice when designing and implementing MEAL systems and analysing the resulting data, these problems will persist.

CLEAR Global's work in forced displacement contexts in Asia, Africa and Europe provides insights into potential pitfalls and how to avoid them. Below we summarise these as a checklist that MEAL practitioners can use to minimise the risks of language-related distortion and exclusion in their efforts to listen to displaced individuals.

Survey design
We can better understand people's needs if we design appropriate, accessible surveys for them.

- Is the language clear and simple? Do the questions avoid jargon and abbreviations?

By using plain language, designers of MEAL tools can increase the likelihood that both enumerators carrying out surveys and respondents understand the questions in the way they are intended to be understood. Our comprehension testing with enumerators in northeast Nigeria found that commonly used abbreviations, technical terms and certain other terms were not widely understood without an explanation.[2]

- Does the survey focus on the needs and interests of the affected population?

A short, clear, contextualised survey that allows respondents to express their needs and views is more likely to lead to programming that is responsive to the affected population. It is also likely to produce better quality data, as data quality depends on the active participation of both enumerators and respondents.

- Do you know what languages affected people speak?

With limited understanding of what languages affected populations speak and their preferred means of communication, agencies may find it difficult to plan adequately for effective data collection. This essential background information can be gathered as part of initial programme design. General language and communication data on certain contexts of forced displacement are available from Multi-Sector Needs Assessments (MSNAs) and from census results mapped by CLEAR Global.[3]

- Did you include language preference questions?

Including language questions as standard in MEAL tools can provide valuable data to improve future data collection and programming. If a school collects data on which language pupils speak at home,

for example, the school can then provide support for those being educated in a second language. Language questions can also be used to identify groups that data collection may have missed and to adapt tools to enable such groups to express their views.[4]

● Are the tools translated into the right languages?

Enumerators in multilingual contexts face significant challenges in managing translation in their work. Translating questions into the relevant languages beforehand reduces pressure to 'sight translate' – where the enumerator has to translate questions on the spot – during data collection. As such, it can increase consistency and free up enumerators to focus on accurately recording the answers. If that is unfeasible or if the enumerators prefer an English text, a glossary of terminology specific to the sector or organisation can be helpful.

● Have you field-tested comprehension?

Testing comprehension of MEAL tools with a sample of community members helps correct for information distortion or loss during translation. For example, words like 'stigmatisation' and 'trauma' may not have direct equivalents in other languages and can be difficult to explain. Moreover, conservative communities may use euphemisms to refer to sensitive concepts such as sexual violence, using words like 'dishonour' or 'stain' instead.[5] Failing to use culturally appropriate and easily understood terms increases the risk that data about people's views and experiences is not recorded.

Role of enumerators

MEAL data is better if the enumerators are trusted and use the languages that respondents are most comfortable speaking.

● Do the enumerators speak those languages? Did you ask?

High linguistic diversity among displaced populations could mean local enumerators may not be able to meet the language needs of all respondents. Similarly, host communities may speak different languages from those

of the displaced population. Enumerators who only speak majority languages and lack adequate support and resources to manage multilingual data collection may be inclined to avoid interviewing people who speak minority languages. This results in data that is unrepresentative of marginalised sections of the community.

● Are you accounting for power dynamics in your selection of enumerators?

Involving affected people in data collection and service provision provides a range of benefits. First, they are more familiar with the cultural aspects of the languages being used, and more likely to understand nuances and euphemisms. Second, respondents may be more likely to disclose opinions (including those that may be seen as socially undesirable, such as being dissatisfied with aid, when they know and trust the enumerator. Organisations working in the Rohingya response in Bangladesh have shown that involving affected populations in data collection "can help build trust and strengthen comprehension, resulting in more nuanced data that most accurately represents the needs and experiences of affected communities".[6] It is worth bearing in mind that an external enumerator may be preferred for heavily stigmatised topics.

● Is your group of enumerators sufficiently diverse, including in gender and language skills?

This is particularly important in communities where it would be inappropriate for male enumerators to speak with women in private, for example. An enumerator with a disability may also be better placed to engage with and understand the perspectives of other persons with disabilities in the community. Failing to account for this could lead to the exclusion of certain perspectives from your data.

Language support for enumerators

● Have you given enumerators access to vetted, trained interpreters for any community languages that they do not speak?

Enumerator conducting comprehension testing with a resident of Farm Centre IDP camp, Maiduguri, July 2017 (Credit: CLEAR Global)

This can help prevent people from being excluded or misunderstood because they do not speak the dominant language, and help reduce reliance on family members and neighbours who are not trained interpreters. When discussing topics like sexual exploitation and abuse, it may be better to have an enumerator and interpreter from outside the community in order to protect privacy.

● Can the enumerators ask questions and get clarifications?

Ideally, enumerators should be able to speak with designers of MEAL tools to resolve any confusion regarding the questions before using the data collection tools. This is challenging when designers roll out pre-approved tools from headquarters-level and the same set of questions is used in multiple contexts for cost-effectiveness and to obtain comparable data across contexts.

In such cases, organisations should ensure that an experienced staff member is available to answer questions and encourage enumerators to raise any issues they foresee.

● Do the enumerators have terminology resources?

Enumerators are rarely professional translators. Relying on them to translate questions and answers can lead to mistranslations and inconsistency, resulting in inaccurate data. Glossaries and pre-recorded questions can help prevent misunderstandings.[7] Either way, testing the enumerators' comprehension of both the questions and the answer options is essential for accurate data collection and takes only 5-10 minutes, depending on the number of words assessed. For example, if people understand 'rape' to apply only to women, or if the enumerator only translates it in that way when posing a question,

then sexual violence against men and boys is even less likely to be reported.[8]

Language technology

● Can you record, transcribe and translate at least a sample of the interviews?

Ideally, all survey interviews would be recorded, transcribed and translated. This would not only improve quality assurance but also complement survey data with rich qualitative narratives and quotes. Translating and transcribing recordings requires significant investment, however, especially for under-resourced languages. But organisations can take steps to increase the likelihood that the data they receive matches the respondents' answers. Recording all interviews and transcribing a sample of them for spot checks is feasible, especially for languages for which automated transcription and translation tools exist and produce high quality results.

Follow-up and analysis

● Have you planned validation meetings?

Results and analyses are seldom translated back into the languages spoken by affected populations. Affected populations therefore have no opportunity to correct any mistakes or contribute their perspectives on how to incorporate findings from MEAL activities into programming. Validation workshops with affected communities could help you identify and address misunderstandings and increase accountability to affected populations.

● Do you disaggregate and analyse data by language?

While disaggregating data by age and gender has become common practice, the same is not true of language. Disaggregating data by language can enable organisations to identify and support marginalised groups. In a 2021 MSNA for Somalia conducted by REACH with analysis from CLEAR Global, for example, almost all respondents using Somali Sign Language said they do not feel that they can influence site-level decisions. Equipped with this information, organisations can now take steps to address communication barriers for site residents with hearing impairments.

Conclusion

Improvement is not only possible; it is happening. There is a growing awareness of the ways in which language and communication issues affect who is heard and who can access services.[9] As more practitioners take this on board and try new approaches, we continue to learn as a sector about how we can make language an enabler of inclusion. Checking practice against the simple questions above can be an important part of that process.

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1. While marginalised language speakers are the most prominently affected by insufficient attention to language barriers, so are speakers of dominant languages with low or no access to education, people with disabilities that affect how they can communicate in any language, people who speak a dominant language but do not understand technical or unfamiliar vocabulary, and people who face communication barriers due to social discrimination.

2. In 2018, Translators Without Borders (now CLEAR Global) found that just 1 in 24 enumerators in northeast Nigeria could explain what 'extremism' meant, and 78% could not explain 'stigmatisation'. Translators without Borders (2018) *The Words Between Us: How well do enumerators understand the terminology used in humanitarian surveys? A study from Northeast Nigeria* bit.ly/enumerator-comprehension

3. See Translators Without Borders *Language Data by Country* https://translatorswithoutborders.org/language-data-by-country/

4. See Translators without Borders *Language Questions in Humanitarian Data Collection* bit.ly/language-questions and Translators without Borders (July 2021) *Five easy steps to integrate language data into humanitarian and development programs* bit.ly/language-data-guide

5. Translators without Borders (March 2019) *Rohingya Language Guidance: Building a better dialogue around gender issues* bit.ly/Rohingya-language-gender

6. For example, see ACAPS, IOM (April 2021) *Our Thoughts: Rohingya Share Their Experiences and Recommendations* bit.ly/Rohingya-experiences-recommendations. See also Ground Truth Solutions (May 2021) *For Rohingya, trust begins with who is asking the questions* bit.ly/ethnicity-interviewer-effects

7. See Translators without Borders TWB Glossaries https://translatorswithoutborders.org/twb-glossaries/

8. Resource & Support Hub (2021) *How to consider language when researching Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH)* bit.ly/language-SEAH

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Beyond consultation: creating meaningful partnerships through participation

Christa Charbonneau Kuntzelman and Anila Noor

Due to embedded power inequities, the voices of persons with lived experience of displacement are often minimised or silenced across humanitarian, governance and academic sectors. We propose a model for meaningful partnership that goes beyond consultation.

Researchers, humanitarian and NGO workers, UN agencies and refugee-hosting governments alike increasingly acknowledge the practical and ethical imperatives to meaningfully consult displaced populations.[1] Many of these stakeholders have made significant efforts to expand refugees' participatory access through adopting and implementing the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The GCR provides a blueprint for coordinated refugee response strategies to ease pressure on hosting states and promote greater refugee self-reliance. As decisions made in policy and programming directly impact displaced persons' lives, the importance of their inclusion cannot be overstated. Yet how does participation 'beyond consultation' look in practice?

We need to clarify what full and meaningful participation entails, and to establish clear pathways to participation so that all stakeholders can systematically work towards its achievement. The Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) identifies meaningful participation as occurring: *When refugees – regardless of location, legal recognition, gender, identity and demographics – are prepared for and participating in fora and processes where strategies are being developed and/or decisions are being made (including at local, national, regional, and global levels, and especially when they facilitate interactions with host states, donors, or other influential bodies), in a manner that is ethical, sustained, safe, and supported financially.*[2] We adopt this powerful definition, which we deem appropriate for all displaced groups, not only because of its clarity and usefulness to identify when participation does or does

not occur but also because displaced persons themselves established the definition.

To propose a new framework for meaningful participation beyond consultation, we build from our personal experiences. Specifically, we leverage Christa's experiences as a researcher who frequently consults and partners with displaced persons in academic research, alongside Anila's experiences as a researcher and as a female leader of New Women Connectors (a refugee-led organisation - RLO) who is frequently consulted but rarely considered as an equal partner or as an 'expert' in the projects to which she contributes.

Consultations with displaced individuals and communities often occur too infrequently and too late, if they occur at all. For instance, researchers may recruit refugees as survey participants or as research assistants but rarely consult them to develop the motivating research question or to establish the research agenda. Similarly, NGO actors may observe displaced communities to determine which humanitarian interventions to implement but fail to allow aid recipients to evaluate existing interventions or to propose new ones. When the displaced are not consulted at all stages (from design to implementation to evaluation) many feel their efforts are undervalued. Their voices and expertise become minimised. This insufficient consultation reflects a glaring power gap between global refugee governance actors and the people they seek to assist.

Nothing about us without us

We propose a transformative framework which honours the call made by the GRN and other displaced leaders for "nothing about us without us".[3] Our model captures

Participants discussing the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of newcomer women as part of a Diversity Dialogue Forum'
(Credit: Rob Godfried, New Women Connectors)

how most actors, despite their best intentions, create research, humanitarian or policy interventions which are based on the concept of 'doing to' – that is, where displaced people are passive recipients of an intervention – or perhaps 'doing for', where there is limited participation but no real agency or power. The goal of true, meaningful partnership requires 'doing with'.

In moving up the levels, from 'doing to' towards 'doing with', consultations become more meaningful because they occur more frequently and allow greater diversity of participation. Moreover, consultations are meaningful when they allow displaced people to express their multiple forms of 'lived', 'expert' and other knowledge,4 and when these expressions are recognised and validated by all consulting parties.

'Doing to' occurs when non-displaced humanitarian, research and governmental actors fail to consult with displaced persons, when consultations are superficial or tokenistic and lived experiences are not valued as expertise, or when these consultations serve the interests and priorities of outside actors rather than reflect those of displaced people. In extreme cases, 'doing to' can include cooptation of displaced voices: where people are represented or their experiences interpreted without acknowledgment of their agency, intellect and capabilities.

The next level – 'doing for' – is an improvement but power asymmetries persist. While ostensibly displaced people are given a larger seat at the table, typically they are only selectively invited to certain high-level meetings, do not contribute towards meeting agenda setting, and are rarely permitted to invite other participants. The lack of full, equal access in turn limits the ability of displaced people to share their knowledge and they fall short of being considered 'experts'.

'Doing with' represents the highest achievement in advancing meaningful participation, though it occurs only rarely. Here, participatory conversations are open-ended with no pre-determined outcomes, and displaced people are involved in agenda setting, project design, implementation and evaluation. This close engagement by displaced people ensures that all research, interventions and programming benefit

and are useful to displaced communities. Individuals are empowered to move beyond being research subjects or 'aid beneficiaries' to being experts and equals: displaced persons' lived and expert knowledge are equally acknowledged. Through co-creating space for knowledge production, persistent power asymmetries begin to weaken.

Practical steps beyond consultation

Anila and her team at New Women Connectors have identified practical questions for stakeholders to evaluate their current participatory approaches. This list of questions is not complete but includes suggestions for how self-reflection can begin.

- How frequently do you consult with displaced persons compared with non-displaced actors?

- In what ways do you consult with displaced persons, and at what stages (for example, research or project design, implementation, evaluation, sharing findings)?

- Can displaced persons decide what responsibilities (for example, research assistant, survey respondent, discussion panellist) they would like to have within a project or are these predetermined? Can they change roles?

- Who decides where to share research or project evaluation findings? How do you communicate findings back to, and discuss next steps forward with, displaced persons who engaged in your project?

- Perhaps most importantly, can displaced people working with you say no? Do you create adequate space not only to hear the opinions, perspectives and knowledge of displaced people but also to take these seriously?

Steps forward to achieve meaningful partnership

The following suggestions are not exhaustive but can be implemented to bolster meaningful participation beyond consultation at any

stage – even after a project has launched. These suggestions aim to narrow the power gaps that minimise or undervalue displaced community voices, ensure interventions are empowering, and help change the way global governance actors engage with the displaced.

Engage early: consultations are most meaningful and productive when engagement occurs as early as possible. If displaced people are not brought into the conversation until after an agenda is set, their ability to share knowledge and achieve more equal power is reduced.

Collaborate at all stages: from design to implementation to evaluation and post-project knowledge dissemination. Consistent, transparent engagement bolsters the likelihood that any intervention will benefit displaced communities as intended.

Expand opportunities for engagement: practitioners and researchers should always explain their projects, including honest discussion of what change displaced people can expect after a project is finished. Consultations must occur with open dialogue where displaced people can choose what roles they are best suited to fill, change roles if desired, and always be able to say no and ask questions.

Consider knowledge and expertise as multi-directional: at all stages of research, programme or policy design, displaced people hold many forms of expertise that can contribute to making external interventions more ethical and more successful. Allow flexible spaces for displaced people to make formal and informal contributions so that they can teach rather than just learn.

Commit to responding to requests for capacity development: researchers and NGOs should provide skills or knowledge-based trainings as directed by their displaced partners. Mutual skills transfer further closes existing power gaps.

For individuals unsure about how to initiate meaningful collaboration, refugee leadership networks and RLOs can help.[5] Current refugee consortia, including the Global Refugee-led Network, R-SEAT (Canada) or the Refugee-led Organization Network (Uganda) are well positioned to facilitate research connections and project management. We believe responsibility lies with non-refugee actors to ensure meaningful collaboration, but they need not and should not feel alone in improving collaboration.

Conclusion

Creating spaces for displaced people to contribute their many forms of knowledge can help balance the power asymmetries that currently diminish the merit and magnitude of displaced populations' contributions. Our recommendations are intended to inspire new paths to make meaningful partnerships the norm rather than the exception. As these collaborations emerge, it will be necessary to monitor what works well and to attend to areas that are not working well. Taking incremental steps from 'doing to' towards 'doing with' can help advance this agenda for more meaningful partnership. With each step, we affirm the humanity and value of all persons, an affirmation which benefits everyone regardless of their status as displaced or non-displaced.

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1. We use 'displaced populations' to refer to any person forced from their homes because of conflict, human rights violations or the need to secure a livelihood unavailable where they live: asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and other migrant categories.

2. GRN and Asylum Access (2019) *Meaningful Refugee Participation as Transformative Leadership: Guidelines for Concrete Action* bit.ly/refugee-participation-guidelines

3. Our model of doing to, for and with is adopted from New Economics Foundation (1998) *Participation Works! 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st century* bit.ly/participation-works and from Cifter A S, Dong H and Cook S (2021) 'Sustaining Inclusive Design Collaborations between UK and Turkey through Co-Design Platforms', *Inclusive Design and Social Innovation*, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Publications

4. The typology of lived and expert knowledge is adopted from Shakman-Hurd B (2015) *Beyond Religious Freedom*. Princeton University Press

5. See Alio M, Alrihawi S, Milner J, Noor A, Wazefadost N and Zigashane P (2020) 'By refugees, for refugees: refugee leadership during COVID-19, and beyond', *Forced Migration Review* issue 64 bit.ly/FMR-refugee-leadership

Power-brokers and gatekeepers as allies: a model for partnership

Abdullah Sarwari, Musa Ahmadi and Tracey Donehue

From their experience of working together on refugee education in Indonesia, the authors identify four modes of refugee inclusion and exclusion in decision-making processes and discuss the roles and responsibilities of allies in overcoming the silencing of refugee voices.

"He's with me." Those words were uttered by Tracey, a white researcher, to enable Musa, a Hazara refugee, to enter the UNHCR building in Jakarta, Indonesia, for a scheduled meeting. As Tracey sat inside waiting for Musa, she watched him walk past the metal and wire barricades only to be stopped and refused entry by a security guard. In this instance, Tracey acted as a literal gatekeeper ally for Musa to access the power-brokers inside the building. Exclusion, however, often manifests in less overt and more complex forms.

The authors' model of empowering partnerships is based on their reflections of working together on refugee education in Indonesia since 2016. They have identified four forms of refugee inclusion/exclusion in policy advocacy, research and practice,

ranging from explicit exclusion through tokenistic inclusion to equal partnership and, ultimately, to refugee leadership. They also focus on how gatekeeper and power-broker 'allies' can ensure people with lived experience of forced migration are able to influence policy and practice.

Abdullah was a refugee in Indonesia for nearly five years. During that time, he co-founded and later became the principal of the Refugee Learning Center (RLC), which provides education to over 300 refugees excluded from formal education in Indonesia. He was resettled in Canada in 2019. Tracey conducted teacher training and mentoring at the RLC for two years before conducting a longitudinal Participatory Action Research study at the RLC during Abdullah's time as principal. As a result of that study, the first formal education pathway for refugees in Indonesia was established: the General Education Development Support Project (GEDSP). Musa managed the Jakarta GEDSP and was instrumental in the successful implementation of GEDSP in Indonesia.

Both Musa and Abdullah are change-makers. They have successfully advocated for and effected change in the area of refugees' rights to education and formal accreditation in Indonesia. Despite their successes, they both acknowledge significant challenges to inclusion in policy decisions affecting their lives and also highlight the role of privileged gatekeepers and power-brokers as allies, not only in facilitating their place at decision-making tables but also in ensuring their voices are heard at them. As one of those allies, Tracey has also witnessed both explicit and unintended exclusion of refugee voices by the power-brokers in Indonesia, while she herself was welcomed and heard as a privileged advocate for refugee education.

Explicit exclusion
Abdullah recalls:

"I saw first-hand when we were excluded from meetings where important decisions about asylum seekers and refugees were made. Much more could be done to improve the situation of refugees in Indonesia if we were given the opportunity to share our thoughts and experiences as forced migrants. At the same time, I can see the difficulties in including forced migrants in discussions. Some may be hesitant to participate for fear of negatively impacting their asylum process."

Abdullah raises an important point for potential allies: that refugees in vulnerable situations feel their present and future lives are completely beholden to power-brokers, namely UNHCR and the host government. Refugees need to feel safe in sharing their stories, their grievances and their solutions. Musa notes that he would feel able to contribute more to this article after securing a resettlement place.

Refugee allies must respect the lived experiences of refugees that make them feel unable to raise their voices. Although not ideal, in situations where refugees are excluded due to systemic barriers or their own fears, allies can use their relative privilege to bring refugees' lived experiences to the attention of power-brokers and to advocate on their behalf. Tracey did this often in her meetings with UNHCR. She felt uncomfortable in doing so, as her right to speak was premised on injustice. Nevertheless, in this way, Abdullah and the RLC's interests were brought to the attention of policymakers, and GEDSP gained UNHCR support on a policy and funding level. In speaking for excluded refugees, allies need to ensure they are accurately representing their interests.

Where refugees are willing to speak with power-brokers and advocate for themselves, allies should focus on facilitating that access. Once GEDSP was established, UNHCR regularly invited Musa to meetings. Musa's access to UNHCR was assisted by his allies' knowledge of the 'rules of the game': as a key member of the GEDSP management team, Musa's inclusion in decision-making processes could not be denied.

Tokenistic inclusion
The authors have also witnessed many examples of tokenistic refugee inclusion at decision-making tables: where refugees are invited or granted the right to participate in fora with power-brokers but their voices are
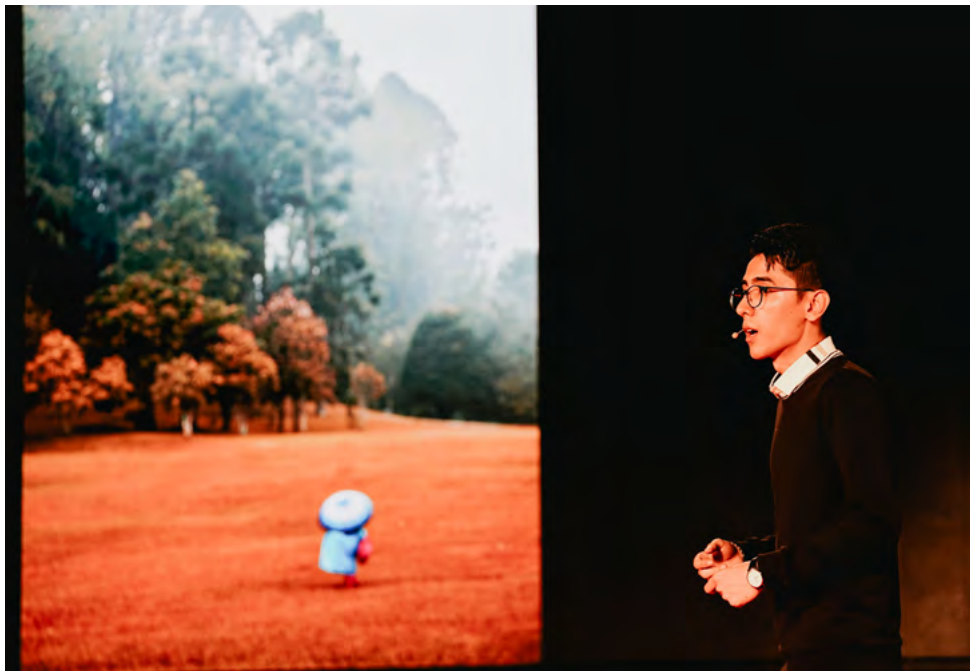
Abdullah Sarwari presenting his talk "The hidden struggle of refugees" at TEDxUbud, Bali, Indonesia in 2019 (Credit: TEDxUbud 2019)

silenced. This silencing is at times intentional. Musa and Tracey noted this at meetings with UNHCR representatives. Questions regarding the refugee community's needs and perceptions were consistently directed to Tracey, despite Musa being a member of the community under discussion. As an ally, Tracey would redirect the questions to Musa. Nevertheless, Musa still did not feel heard or validated as an expert at the table. He reflects, "I am human, but to UNHCR I am different, not like other people".

This was also the case at some conferences Abdullah and Tracey attended together where non-refugee experts spoke to refugees about refugee issues. At one such conference, refugees were not invited to speak even as the non-refugee 'experts' openly pondered how refugees felt about certain issues. Again, as a privileged ally with an implicit 'right to speak', Tracey redirected questions to refugee participants whom she knew had valuable inputs. Once a few refugee participants had

answered questions, providing much needed and insightful contributions based on their lived experiences, other refugee participants in the room recognised their right to speak and did so freely. This was an example of tokenistic inclusion, albeit unintended, as the conveners failed to acknowledge the power hierarchies in the room which could inhibit refugee participation, as well as different cultural norms of public speaking. The conference in question was also conducted entirely in English, which served to silence many of the refugee participants.

An ally plays two roles in mitigating tokenistic inclusion. Firstly, they can identify the possibility of tokenistic inclusion at the planning stage of a forum and make recommendations to the organisers around the use of interpreters, facilitating anonymous contributions and culturally appropriate modes of participation. Secondly, they can ensure that those in the room know they have the right to speak, if they wish to do so.

Equal partnerships

Equal partnerships occur where refugee and non-refugee knowledge and contributions are equally valued and reflected in policy advocacy, research and practice. GEDSP is one example of a successful equal partnership. The project arose from a Participatory Action Research (PAR) study with volunteer refugee teachers at the RLC aiming to improve the quality of English language education at the centre. Tracey, as the primary researcher, brought her knowledge on teacher development, additional language acquisition, and research practices, while the participants brought their lived experiences of learning and teaching languages in specific contexts, as well as the educational needs and desires of their students.

The teachers felt that their own levels of proficiency in English were a barrier to the provision of quality education and most of them also felt they could not confidently present themselves as 'teachers' as they had not completed their own secondary education. The solution they desired was to improve their English, preferably through an accredited course of study. At that point in time, no formal secondary education pathways were available to refugees in Indonesia. However, Tracey was aware that the internationally recognised General Education Development (GED) diploma[1] was accessible to refugees in other sites of educational exclusion. In this way, the first formal secondary education pathway for refugees in Indonesia was established.

UNHCR's education policy is focused on host country integration. Garnering UNHCR support for an alternative pathway through the GED required joint advocacy for policy change. Tracey initially conducted that advocacy alone on behalf of her research collaborators; once the GED project was expanded to Jakarta, however, Musa was also involved in advocating for UNHCR support and in developing implementation protocols.

Refugee leadership

Refugee leadership – the final form of refugee inclusion – is the ideal co-production model in policy advocacy, research and practice. In refugee leadership, refugees are themselves the power-brokers and gatekeepers. Allies are still supportive of their aims and actions but there is no sense of dependency on outsiders for refugees' voices to be heard and their goals to be achieved.

The RLC in Indonesia is an example of refugee leadership. This informal school was established in 2015, at a time when UNHCR Indonesia was advising refugees not to meet in groups and draw attention to themselves, so as to avoid antagonising the local population. However, as refugee children could not attend local schools, the refugee community chose to disregard this advice and to set up their own school. Abdullah was one of the co-founders and later the principal. The RLC management board, teachers and parent representatives are all volunteers from the refugee community. Together, they provide education for over 300 students. Although the RLC receives vital support from an array of allies, the decision-making power for all RLC concerns resides with the RLC community itself.

Abdullah acknowledges his allies in helping him represent refugee voices in a very different forum: a TEDx event in Ubud in 2019. He recalls, "I was once again blessed with so many amazing people who introduced me to the TEDxUbud team, helped me write and edit my story, practise delivering it, and offering whatever practical help was needed to ensure I did not miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity." Although allies assisted him, it was Abdullah's story and Abdullah's voice which held the power on that stage. Despite his involvement in numerous refugee events and publishing articles throughout his time in Indonesia, this was the first time he felt that power. His voice and his story were met with a standing ovation and many tears in the audience. Abdullah's talk educating people on the plight of refugees in Indonesia has since been watched by over 6000 viewers in YouTube. His voice has been heard.

Bob Rae, Canada's ambassador to the UN in New York, has said, "We must listen to the voices of refugees, and their victimhood and lack of agency must come to an end. That is the key to the path forward, and it must fuel

both national and international policies."[2] The authors' experiences show that even among agencies charged with representing refugees' interests, refugees' voices often remain silenced. But they have also found there are ways to overcome barriers to refugee inclusion and leadership in policy advocacy, research, and practices which directly affect the lives of people experiencing displacement, and that allies have an important role to play on the road to refugee leadership. The authors hope that their examples of overcoming refugees' exclusion, and their resulting successful partnerships, provide guidance to others in ensuring refugees' voices are heard and heeded.

Abdullah Sawari would like to extend special thanks to his ally Nila Tanzil, an Indonesian entrepreneur, activist, and author. Musa Ahmadi wishes to extend special thanks to his ally Brandon Baughn, former Director of Roshan Learning Center.

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1. The US General Education Development diploma is based on an individual achieving a high school level knowledge in five areas: writing, mathematics, reading, science and social studies.

2. bit.ly/refugees-equal-access

Voice, identity and listening: reflections from a refugee

Meh Sod Paw, Minkyung Choi and Jihae Cha

To better understand and respond to the real needs of refugees, we need to learn from the stories of people like Meh Sod who resettled in the USA aged 12.

In formulating, designing and implementing policy, practice, and research related to displaced populations, the perspectives of refugees are seldom reflected or prioritised. Instead, the agendas and voices of those with power or those who provide financial funding are put first. This is not to say that these decision-makers' intentions are unsympathetic, but rather that their responses may not always be culturally appropriate or relevant to displaced populations, and may therefore fail to offer holistic, long-term support.

Meh Sod, who resettled in the US from a refugee camp in Thailand at the age of 12, describes her younger self as 'voiceless'. But listening to Meh Sod's stories, which paint rich portraits of her journey, reflections, challenges, and joys, we felt that she was anything but voiceless. The problem, then, seemed to lie in the lack of opportunities provided for individuals like Meh Sod to share their experiences. Meh Sod explains how she navigated the resettlement process, her schooling experience and her identity (re)formation, while her co-authors reflect on whose voices are overlooked and why.

Relocating to the US

The morning before my family made our way to the bus station, my last stares went to my childhood play areas – my house, the bamboo and tamarind trees, and the dusty road. The station was packed with goodbye handshakes, conversations and tears. It was just loud enough for us to hear a man yelling "household number A1-73, get on the vehicle", and so we left the refugee camp for America.

As we settled into our new home in Georgia, we became accustomed to the rhythms of our new life. Every Saturday morning, my family and I prepared to make our weekly trip from Stone Mountain to Clarkston. It took approximately an

hour and thirty minutes by foot for us to get there. Because we did not own a car, we selected the route most amenable to the shopping cart we pulled along with us. Along the way, my siblings and I picked up pecan nuts that had fallen from the trees and garlic chives that grew at the side of the road, marvelling at their abundance. People passing in cars stared at us, but it did not bother us that much. Our steps became lighter as we drew closer to our destination: the Clarkston Thriftown store. Thriftown has a plain exterior, its sign bearing no catchy logo, but for me it was more than just a store. On our trips, we would buy big bags of rice that were reminiscent of the ones that UNHCR distributed to the refugee camp in Thailand where I grew up. Whenever I saw fellow Burmese on trips to the grocery store, I felt unexpected joy. Those moments of connectedness, albeit momentary, eased the weight of the strangeness I had to adjust to.

Schooling: representation and belonging
I still remember the first day of school. Along the walls were banners with the word Welcome in different languages – Chinese, German, Spanish and more. I was fascinated by the diversity of languages, but more importantly I was excited by the idea that the classroom would be a space where I could finally process some of the experiences and thoughts that had been bottled up inside me for many years. However, I quickly learned that the celebration of multiculturalism that was openly on display never left the walls. The different languages were never practised in classroom discussions, and there were no opportunities to share our stories.

Compared with regular students, refugee students have personal experiences and valuable skills that are unrelated to topics valued in the classroom. I appreciated how the materials we encountered in class showed me different perspectives, enabling me to understand different communities and topics I could not always relate to like racism and gender issues. As I learned about American history I developed empathy towards African Americans. I thought, 'I wish they could be treated equally'. But I don't think that recognition was reciprocal because my story, my history and my culture were never brought up in class discussions. There was no equal sharing of knowledge. The other students did not know about me – what it means to live in a refugee camp, what it feels like to live without family members… I was

engaged with other people's stories and history and disconnected from my own. In the educational setting, my first language was no longer useful and my culture was not needed. I interacted with texts that did not contain representations of myself or people like me. I felt invisible.

For refugee students, I think the most basic need is a sense of belonging. If we could see that the material we absorb is not just for survival but for connection too, then the experience of learning would be more meaningful. Our situation might be difficult for many schools to fully understand because we, ourselves, do not pay attention to our feelings or know how to communicate them. For instance, a lot of refugee students in Clarkston don't have people around them who really understand them. I also recognise that it is really hard to work with refugee children because of the difficulty in communicating with their parents, either because of language barriers or a lack of communication channels. So refugee students don't always get the attention they need. In fact, we don't know what we need. Now, I know what kind of things the students need so I think I'd be able to come up with strategies to support these kids.

Finding my identity and voice
In America, we were granted the opportunity to meet new faces and forge new relationships. But when I turned around, the person next to me was no longer a familiar face in the neighbourhood. Life in America made me realise the necessity of having a heritage that has been preserved for me. I realised that I had left behind pieces of my Karen origin and history as I encountered new cultures on my journey: Burmese, Thai and American. Being accustomed to living on the border but not being welcome in nearby territories, I carry with me a sense of inferiority that distracts me from seeing the worth of my own culture. Having an identity that is only half-established while learning to adapt to the American lifestyle keeps me in a bubble that distances me from the community I live in. Coming to the realisation that I am no longer being held in one place on the border, I want to search for the home my ancestors came from.

I have learned from oral traditions that my Karen ancestors travelled across the 'River of Running Sand' (the Gobi Desert) searching for a place where they could create a home. Instead of trying to create a new home for myself within

the multicultural community I have been brought into, I want to reflect on the cultural home that lies inside me and be recognised for my whole story and not just by one dimension of my life that labels me as a refugee.

I carry the stories of my ancestors. Through their folktales, stories and history, I hear the voices of individuals like me who are on a journey to go somewhere where their ancestors have gone. My journey is one of preserving what I find in order to allow subsequent Karen generations to trace our origins back from the present day to our ancient roots, like a little stream being able to flow back into the big ocean.

Concluding reflections

After listening to Meh Sod's stories, we (Minkyung and Jihae) learned that refugees are not given much choice in decision-making on matters pertaining to their own livelihoods and day-to-day lives. Generally, the average person may understand one aspect of refugees' lives but recognising their fuller emotional needs takes time. Therefore, as forced migration researchers, we felt that Meh Sod's voice was crucial to all phases of our project; from research design to implementation and publication. Looking back, Meh Sod acknowledges that community, a sense of belonging, and mentorship are crucial for youth with refugee backgrounds, although she was not aware of these needs when she was younger. In education specifically, students need guidance and advice that address the unique situation of youth from refugee backgrounds. "I'm not sure if I can speak to [administrators and school leaders] about the needs of the students. I'm not sure if they are willing to listen. There are so many problems and I'm not sure where to begin", Meh Sod explains. Additionally, because schools prioritise examination scores above all else, Meh Sod feels that students' needs are often pushed to the side. "To support refugee students in the classroom, schools should be encouraged to make the classroom a familiar setting by incorporating their culture, music and art, to make them feel safe and comfortable."

As the years go by, Meh Sod is slowly but surely finding her voice. "After a long time, I have found support for different aspects of life, and feel equipped to tell our story," she says. She acknowledges that for youth like her, much time and patience are needed to help them recognise and assert their needs. For this shift to happen, instead of decision-makers making assumptions about what displaced populations need and desire, refugees should be invited to these discussions. Providing tools and resources is essential in the resettlement process, but it is of paramount importance that there are ample spaces where refugees can share their stories.

Meh Sod calls for "the patience to work with refugees" and for "spaces to share and hear from refugees". Perhaps for policy, practice, and research to be truly significant and meaningful, we just need to listen. This may entail time-consuming processes that are not immediately fruitful, but such approaches may provide the holistic, long-term support that is truly in the interest of those like Meh Sod.

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Rhetorical commitments and funding realities in Dadaab, Kenya

Rachel Silver, Mark Okello Oyat, HaEun Kim and Sahra Mohamed Ismail

In this article, we draw on our diverse experiences as a transnational research team affiliated with the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees Project to reflect on how current funding practices continue to constrain refugee-led research in Dadaab, Kenya.

Over the past five years, Northern institutions have committed in increasingly visible ways to support refugee-led research. Private foundations work to cultivate refugee scholars through flexible academic programming and fellowships.[1] Bilateral institutions use targeted funding calls to amplify the voices of refugee- and IDP-led organisations and to support research capacity at Southern institutions. Universities have launched transnational networks to spotlight and support research by refugees.[2] These initiatives seek to correct historic inequities in forced migration studies, where a problematic politics of representation has been widely acknowledged. They reflect a broader push to localise knowledge production, giving power and resources to refugee actors rather than to international institutions.

In our experience, however, such efforts can be impeded by various barriers. We are four Canada- and Kenya-based scholars who came together in the context of the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) project. Two of us (Oyat and Ismail) are refugee graduates of the BHER programme living in Kenya, and two of us (Silver and Kim) are Canada-based employees of York University.

BHER is a consortium of universities and NGOs that aims to foster more expansive and gender-equitable higher education opportunities for refugees. In 2018, in response to student requests and in an effort to foster local knowledge production, BHER began to offer graduate programming to eligible candidates in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. As of July 2022, 18 men and 10 women have completed a research-intensive York University Master of Education (MEd) degree based entirely in the camps.

Through their scholarship, BHER graduate students and alumni help to mitigate representation gaps within education and forced migration studies. Since 2019 they have published 15 single- and co-authored articles in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. They have presented at multiple international conferences and universities, including UNHCR's Global Refugee Forum.[3] In 2020, five MEd graduates, including co-authors Oyat and Ismail, jointly established the Dadaab Response Association (DRA), the first refugee-led organisation (RLO) in Dadaab which works to produce high-quality research reflecting local interests. As a registered community-based organisation in Kenya, DRA works with other institutions and individuals, including co-authors Silver and Kim, on diverse projects related to education research and practice.

These are huge strides. Yet significant barriers remain to equity in knowledge production and, more specifically, to the meaningful transfer of resources from North to South.

Blocked from full participation

Funding calls from bilateral institutions to support refugee-led initiatives signal a commitment to diversify partners and projects. Yet the structure of applications explicitly and/or implicitly results in a continued reliance on Northern institutions as primary contractors and Northern researchers as Principal Investigators (PIs). As a result, funding remains channelled towards, and funnelled through, larger international organisations, rather than refugee-led ones.

A recent funding call for proposals from the Government of Canada, for instance, focused on refugee education in Sub-Saharan

Africa. The call was ground-breaking in framing quality schooling as best achieved through building the capacity of, and making grants to, RLOs. The grants had stringent requirements, however, including for the primary contractor to be Canadian and to have the demonstrated institutional capacity to manage large sums of money (up to CAD $40 million[4] over five years). This eliminated many potential candidates, leaving a small field of mostly established international NGOs eligible to apply. In our experience, these organisations tend to develop their proposals at their headquarters, soliciting RLO participation to bolster an application rather than to direct and shape it.

There are very real constraints to redirecting bilateral funding away from international organisations. However, by requiring a particular kind of primary contractor, otherwise transformative calls become subject to the usual shortcomings of North/South research partnerships: misaligned expectations and goals between partners; neo-colonial assumptions around who holds expertise and who needs capacity building; disproportionate Northern influence; inequitable, transnational division of roles; and, of course, deeply uneven access to funding.

As a research team, we have encountered some of these challenges when applying for funding. The four co-authors designed a qualitative project to explore obstacles to the localisation of knowledge production in Dadaab. Refugee scholars, however, could not be on the application as Co-PIs without a university affiliation. Nor could they receive funding for research activities as official project collaborators. To be paid through the grant, Oyat and Ismail would need to be hired as consultants or as research assistants. Both of these titles relegate the scholars, and their RLO, to secondary positions. We were left to decide whether we should submit a project proposal that was equitable in name but not in resource allocation, or one that maintained a hierarchical arrangement in titles but allowed more flexibility in the transfer of funds – an impossible choice if meaningful reciprocal engagement is the goal.

Programming or research grants that directly fund RLOs can mitigate these kinds of problems. These opportunities, though usually smaller in scale, are crucial for RLOs to gain experience as primary contractors and thus become more likely to succeed in larger grant applications. When DRA members identified a highly relevant, bilaterally funded opportunity for which they met all requirements, they were unable to register on the organisation's portal due to technological challenges and therefore unable to submit a full application. Refugee scholars need reliable internet, sufficient data bundles, electricity and the technology to access portals that are not always easy to navigate, even in other settings. High barriers to entry such as the Canadian Common Curriculum Vitae (CV), which is required for Canada's federally funded research proposals and takes hours of uninterrupted connectivity to complete, or the US Data Universal Number System and System for Award Management, render scholars and their organisations in remote or resource-scarce environments systematically disadvantaged. For these reasons, and despite an increasing rhetorical commitment to localisation among funders, the DRA remains most often in a subcontracting position. Oyat, Ismail, and their peers in Dadaab are regularly solicited to participate in large grants applications yet become nominal or even invisible in project and grant management once funding is awarded. This marginalisation becomes particularly poignant in grants awarded on the basis of partnership with grassroots organisations.

Feelings of mistrust and marginalisation manifest most clearly in decisions around project finances. We have observed that funds are most frequently directed around or through, rather than to, RLOs. This is justified by risk aversion and concerns about capacity, but it impedes the ability of RLOs to act as primary contractors and limits their ability to grow. Local groups may indeed face capacity challenges, but project funds can be successfully managed even while an organisation receives capacity support.[5]

DRA was recently invited to partner in an international research collaboration

on refugee experiences in the region. Due to eligibility requirements, however, the organisation could not receive funds directly. To avoid bureaucratic red tape, the primary contractor decided to hire individual DRA members as consultants rather than broker an organisational agreement. This decision rendered refugee scholars unable to collectively bargain around issues of workload and finances. It left DRA both ineligible for overhead payments and equipment, and unable to feature the project on its institutional resumé despite its members having conducted the research.

The choice to hire refugee scholars as consultants is but one of several budgetary strategies that can hinder the long-term capacity of an RLO. Another is the reimbursement model. Grants with reimbursement funding models – rather than advancing funding to an organisation for project activities – exclude RLOs almost by default. RLOs cannot spend what they do not have, nor can they afford to wait weeks or months for repayment.

These kinds of strategies do not necessarily reflect malintent. They may emerge in response to pressing timelines, strict accountability systems, and a genuine desire to pay refugee researchers. Both Silver and Kim have been involved in projects in which such strategies have been deployed. We (Silver and Kim) are implicated in the decisions that we critique. Yet these decisions can damage feelings of trust on the part of refugee organisations. As DRA members, we (Oyat and Ismail) often feel like beneficiaries or research assistants, rather than organisational partners.

Recommendations for practice

Given the barriers that continue to impede the meaningful transfer of resources for research in refugee and forced migration studies, we offer the following suggestions, primarily towards funding institutions:

- Pair direct research or programmatic funding to RLOs with tailored, long-term opportunities to build organisational

capacity in order to increase RLO eligibility to be primary contractors in the future.[6]

- Revisit eligibility requirements for primary contractor or PI positions, particularly if localisation is a desired outcome. This might include redefining what is 'acceptable experience'. Funders might also invite local organisations to audit their calls for proposals to see if they are unnecessarily onerous.

- Include a requirement that a percentage of funding for project operational costs be allocated to subcontracting RLOs as a capital investment.

- Use advancement rather than reimbursement budget models whenever possible. Flexible funding opportunities also foster more locally responsive programming and increase local organisations' capacity to succeed.

- Ensure that RLOs, especially those involved in projects as subcontractors, have direct opportunities to engage with funders and direct access to project documents related to their work (such as budget reports, monitoring and evaluation findings, etc.).

- Offer organisational development opportunities to RLOs, tailored to their specific needs.

- Ensure funding applications have flexible deadlines, user-friendly portals and low technological requirements whenever possible.

Allowing local, refugee-led, and other non-traditional institutions, as well as individuals, to serve as primary contractors and PIs on major grants will take time and resources but it will also produce better, more inclusive research. For now, as a group of scholars with diverse geographic, institutional and socio-political positionalities, we proceed with care. We work to navigate structural constraints and troubling inequities with open communication, critical self-reflection

and, as much as possible, inclusive budgeting practices. This is insufficient, but it is a start.

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1. bit.ly/research-fellowships ; bit.ly/mastercard-scholars-program

2. bit.ly/refugee-economies-rlrh

3. For the full catalogue of research output by BHER graduate students, see: www.bher.org/research

4. Approximately US$31 million

5. See Usen (2019) 'Localisation: we are frustrated, not stupid!', *Forced Migration Review* issue 60. bit.ly/localisation-usen

6. See UNHCR (2020) 'Refugee-Led Innovation Fund Concept Note' bit.ly/refugee-led-innovation

Funding, credibility and visibility: supporting forced migration research in the Global South

Rossmary D Márquez-Lameda

Academics in the Global South who are conducting research on the Venezuelan displacement crisis confront a number of challenges relating to funding, credibility and visibility. Interviewees reflect on how to tackle these challenges in light of realities on the ground.

This article draws on ten in-depth interviews conducted with academics based in Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Peru and the Dominican Republic who are currently conducting research related to the Venezuelan displacement crisis.[1] All interviews were conducted remotely, in Spanish, in January and February 2022. I interviewed two types of researchers: those with a long-standing academic trajectory and training in forced migration research, and others who found themselves researching the experiences of migrants and refugees indirectly, given their areas of expertise such as sexual and reproductive health and infectious diseases, without being 'migration researchers'. Regardless of the type of research all of these academics conducted (whether theoretical or applied), they often worked collaboratively with other institutions, either nationally or regionally. Some worked with academic institutions in the Global North.

Key issues that emerged from these interviews were the lack of funding, as well as challenges related to academic credibility and visibility, that arose as a result of the researchers being based in or from the Global South.

Funding: different realities

Those interviewed highlighted the failure of funding agencies in the North to acknowledge the realities and challenges inherent in conducting research on forced migration in the context of the Venezuelan crisis. According to one researcher from Colombia: "Seeing the reality from the outside is very different to living it". This researcher shared his experience of an international funding call on health-care access for Venezuelans in Colombia. Based on his work with Venezuelan migrants and his preliminary research, he had proposed to undertake qualitative research to understand the topic of xenophobia as a barrier to health-care access. However, the funding agencies wanted metrics that included the number of doctors, number of beds in a hospital, and so on. "Why would we care about the number of beds and doctors," said the researcher, "if we know the migrants will mostly be turned away at the door and not even make it inside the

People crossing the Colombia-Venezuela border (Credit: Arturo Harker Roa)

hospital?" In this case, the researcher and his team did not proceed with this proposal as they considered the quantitative approach requested by the funding agency to overlook important factors related to prejudice and discrimination in health-care provision.

A researcher from the Dominican Republic voiced concerns about funding calls that had requirements that were too costly or not feasible in countries with limited resources: "Sometimes you read these funding announcements and you think they were written for the North". In this case, the researcher approached the programme officer and requested, successfully, for the announcement to be changed. Funding calls that do not give these researchers the flexibility and freedom to approach issues concerning Venezuelan displacement in ways that capture realities on the ground limit the researchers' possibility to conduct appropriate and meaningful research.

Another researcher, from Chile, highlighted the need for funding opportunities to acknowledge cultural and social diversity in the Global South: diversity that generates different ways of knowing and perceiving reality. She

raised the issue of how funding agencies in the Global North conceptualise and use terms that might not conform to their use in the Global South. More specifically, she mentioned how the terms 'cultural competence' in the North and 'intercultural' in the South are used and expected to be assessed. "For the South to create a checklist is unacceptable. This is what the North does with the concept of cultural competence."

Some of the interview participants mentioned the bureaucratic challenges inherent in applying for funding and their limited institutional capacity to do so: "It could take several weeks or months for our institutions to process some of the required paperwork for a grant proposal. By the time we had the documents and the institutional approvals, the deadline had already passed", said a researcher from Colombia. Others similarly reported limited human resources and capacity within their institutions to write and put together research proposals that required a quick turnaround. Even when they win funding, they find that academic institutions in their region have not necessarily adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of Venezuelan migrants, which

presents challenges to recruiting interview subjects and implementing research projects. For example, as one interviewee in Colombia explained, research institutions might require the migrants to have legal identity documents before the universities are able to process incentives and reimbursements for costs (such as food and transport) associated with their participation in a study.

Academic credibility and visibility
The issue of academic credibility also came up in conversations about barriers to funding. "To get a grant from a large funding agency, I know I need a prestigious university to back me", said a researcher from Colombia. This requirement to be connected to a university from the North and, often, to have a university in the North as the main institution on a grant application is problematic. It limits the possibility of researchers and institutions in the South to establish themselves as credible entities conducting research on forced migration – in short, to become visible. The question of credibility and visibility was common in my conversations with local academics and made me wonder: in the context of the Venezuelan crisis, who in the Global South is perceived and conceptualised as a credible researcher in forced migration? Which researchers are invited to join humanitarian fora and why are others left out?

The interviews highlighted how different types of researchers were viewed as a key factor affecting the question of credibility and visibility. Established migration researchers approached studying Venezuelan displacement more theoretically, focusing on the migratory processes and policies in the region. Applied researchers, however, researched migrant and refugee experiences indirectly, addressing pressing questions concerning broader socio-economic realities in the host countries. For the applied researchers, the Venezuelan migration phenomenon did not need to be conceptualised theoretically but generated questions that needed to be answered – answers that could support communities that were suffering and

help governments understand how to address the displacement situation.

This dichotomy was not always clear-cut; there is substantial interdisciplinary and multi-method work taking place in the region and in the field of forced migration studies. However, there seems to be an issue that researchers conducting valuable but more empirical work on Venezuelan displacement, who interact directly with migrants and refugees, are less likely to be seen as credible authorities in the field of forced migration despite the unique perspectives they bring to the table. A researcher who has done extensive research on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in the refugee camps in northern Brazil said that, although his work is known and seen as credible in the field of SRH, his team does not get invited to participate in humanitarian discussions.

Addressing the challenges
A number of recommendations to foster collaboration and increase access to funding opportunities emerged from the interviews.

Research networks within countries or regions could help foster collaborations and discussions on issues pertaining to forced migration. They could help connect academics conducting similar research, encourage interdisciplinary work and even provide opportunities for training. Given the increasing number of researchers starting to work with migrant and refugee communities, training sessions could include ethical discussions and strategies to conduct projects with these communities. Long-term funding is needed to enable such research networks to be sustainable.

Seed funding, given in order to cover the launch of a new project, should be provided to initiatives led by researchers in the Global South; funding levels could be increased over time based on performance.

Context-sensitive funding announcements would give researchers the independence and flexibility to address a research problem using conceptual frameworks

and methodological approaches that reflect the realities on the ground. Funding agencies should also be open to researching negotiating with funding agencies to allow different approaches not originally included in funding announcements.

Funding, credibility and visibility are interrelated concepts that should be understood within the geographical context of these researchers and the uniqueness of the Venezuelan displacement situation. As long as funding agencies continue to impose certain ways of knowing and thinking, research will not reflect reality. As long as researchers need a university from the Global North to back them so they can get a grant, these researchers will not become visible. And as long as applied researchers are not considered to be authorities on forced migration, their unique perspectives will be overlooked.

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1. Although all the academics were located and working in these countries, not all of them were originally from these countries. Two researchers are from France and one researcher is from Argentina.

Co-writing and inclusive publications

Kirandeep Kaur

My reflections on publishing inclusively through co-writing highlighted many barriers faced by refugee researchers and research participants in the quest to be published on an equitable standing with western, non-refugee researchers.

Refugee narratives have flourished in recent years both in the media and in academia.[1] Many of these efforts illustrate ways that refugees have begun reclaiming their voice and agency through different narrative forms, with increasing control over their storytelling. Yet the conversation about how to include refugees' voices, experience and knowledge in academic discourse and knowledge practices is far from over.

Coming from a background in language teaching as well as forced migration-related research, I have long struggled to know how to communicate to others about my shared experiences with forced migrants in my research journey. Is it possible to engage in research communication with refugee participants (who are not already scholars themselves)? Are equal voices possible in research communication when deeply unequal power dynamics exist?

Last year I worked to publish a special issue of *Displaced Voices: A Journal of Archives, Migration and Cultural Heritage* entitled 'In Their Own Voices'.[2] This special issue was conceptualised to re-centre the voices of female forced migrant leaders in Kuala Lumpur, who became my co-authors[3], and to portray them as agents in communicating their knowledge through co-writing. I discovered, however, that co-writing is fraught with questions around power, practice and knowledge.

Challenging times and writing processes
Our first challenge was finding a 'safe' publishing space. We found that the publication processes in refugee-related journals or online magazines were prohibitive. There were few built-in mechanisms for supporting first-time writers from vulnerable backgrounds and these mechanisms lacked discussion space for co-writing practices between researchers and participants. We came to consider the publication process as a barrier to co-writing with the female refugee leaders. It inhibited the space to develop ideas collectively. A reimagination of the usual process (submission of concept, first draft, editing with comments, final drafts and edits) was needed. The second challenge was the writing experience and digital literacy of the co-authors. It became clear that the stress

Sharifah Shakirah, Founder and Director of Rohingya Women Development Network (RWDN) (Credit: Amin Kamrani)

of adhering to publication deadlines and producing submissions without mentorship and writing instruction reduced our chances of co-authoring successfully. The co-authors required flexible processes based on dialogue that enhanced their writing skills.

The Living Refugee Archive and the newly established *Displaced Voices* journal offered flexibility. Nevertheless, all those involved in the project were spread out globally and we were working during the pandemic. In total we spent seven months from first meeting with the women to publication. A significant time was dedicated to working on the writing skills of the co-authors, who requested individual guidance based on their writing skills, knowledge and personal circumstances. Most were highly capable in their speaking skills and had presented at numerous UN-related, NGO or academic conferences, but their writing abilities were very fixed on producing a certain type of text such as writing for NGOs to obtain funding, or writing social media posts or short news articles. Writing in longer prose or specifically for a journal article was

a new experience. Most were unfamiliar with the general format (introduction, main body, conclusion) or basic paragraphing practices. These are writing skills that many of those who have been taught in western[4] educational institutions take for granted. What is often unacknowledged is the communication privilege granted by such access to writing practice. This is an additional layer through which academia places an emphasis on western knowledge over the voices and knowledge of disenfranchised communities.

Creating a co-writing practice

The *Displaced Voices* journal allowed us to create our own timetable and process that was supportive but also met the journal's standards. We agreed to leave aside referencing, for example, to allow greater forms of expression and re-centre the co-authors' voices and writing styles. We created an iterative process (brainstorming, training on writing, writing, co-writing, editing and peer feedback) to support the establishment of dialogue and reflexivity. Differentiating the processes for co-authors based on their

individual writing level also meant having to set aside time for individual Skype sessions, creating individual and group chats on social media and also a peer feedback loop.

Eventually, I embedded a Reflect pedagogy[5], a participatory process which places emphasis on reflexivity and co-action as well as on learners' voices at the centre. Flexibility, creative inputs and informality on the side of the publisher were essential in allowing the co-authors space to produce their work. Nevertheless, all the co-authors came to view my role as a teacher of writing skills rather than as a co-author. We attempted to offset this issue by using their ideas or texts they had already produced as starting points to discuss strategies to improve linguistic structures separately from discussions on content. Even so, questions continued to arise about how we could produce the content of the articles on a truly equal basis.

Another practice we implemented was peer feedback between the co-authors to increase their confidence and dialogue between them. We found this process to be far more effective, less intimidating and more empowering than a peer review process with experts and other researchers. The final editing check involved some aspects of sharing their articles with other researchers and the journal editor.

The most important practical learning outcome was to create space to vary my own role and adapt it to the needs of the co-authors as required, while always placing their voices at the forefront of the articles.[6] At times I might challenge them to rethink, reimagine and reengage with their own stories beyond the usual 'refugee story' they would tell others about themselves. Despite some of the successes of these practices, however, our original relationships as researcher/participant/co-researchers did not grow into the equitable writing partnership we had envisaged. Rather, teaching elements overshadowed my intended role as a second author.

Balancing power and voices

Publishing is not by its nature inclusive. The standards and expertise in writing and the process of publication can be barriers which prioritise Western modalities of writing over voices expressing lived experiences. My experience working on this project showed that a flexible attitude and willingness to engage in conversation with contributors can create space for greater inclusion of these voices. More inclusive and equitable publishing practices that provide a platform for forced migrants' knowledge and voices are possible, by experimenting with new roles and viewing study participants as co-authors in research communication. However, concerns and challenges remain.

Within expected standards in academic discourse, potential co-authors from vulnerable backgrounds may lack the precise skills demanded and confidence to access opportunities to express their realities. Co-writing with those originally in a researcher role may create opportunities; however, if the researcher has greater ability to mimic accepted writing forms, they may ultimately dominate the co-authors' voices.

Using a pedagogic approach instead of focusing purely on research communication was unexpected. Although the co-authors said that this learning was an important motivation for them, it provoked questions around power and positionality. Working with participants from my research meant there was already a tendency for them to see me as more knowledgeable, regardless of the participatory approach emphasising their knowledge. The attempt to mitigate this through our co-writing practices did not entirely eradicate the imbalance, which I find is still embedded in some form throughout all the articles.

As an early career researcher, I admit I am hesitant to re-engage in this form of co-writing. Publishers who are willing to provide this flexibility may not be considered high-impact journals. This may mean such contributions are not necessarily valued by academic institutions. Also, co-authorship itself does not necessarily reflect the deep processes that the co-authors and I engaged in to create these articles. Much of our collaborative knowledge-work is rendered invisible. I have at times

questioned if these efforts are valuable to either myself or the co-authors.

Publishing inclusively and co-writing still require greater structural support, innovation and willingness on the part of researchers and publishers. There does appear to be an increasing desire to make publication spaces inclusive of forced migrant voices. However, a discussion is needed on how to determine best practices and whether adhering to writing norms is still desirable given the inherent hierarchies it creates. Academic institutions which are open-minded and place high value on co-writing (rather than primarily on 'high impact' journals with their stricter requirements) can also provide further opportunities, though this does not answer how to involve practitioners. Co-writing as a practice is currently fraught with questions. Hopefully, these questions challenge us to reimagine how we communicate research and work

with forced migrants as agents able to express their lived realities and hidden knowledge.

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1. I've drawn inspiration from a number of platforms that showcase refugee narratives, such as Refugee Tales, Exiled Writers Ink, The Archipelago and ArabLit. These and others challenge assumptions around knowledge, story and power by allowing space to forefront forced migrants' experiences.

2. Journal created by the Living Refugee Archive at University of East London. Special issue at: bit.ly/displaced-voices-journal

3. Naima Ismail, Syedah Husain, Sharifah Shakirah (who translates for Syedah Husain), Parisa Ally and Arifa Sultana represent the voices from Somali, Afghan and Rohingya communities.

4. In this article, the author avoids capitalising 'western' in order to more gently emphasise the need for decentralising.

5. I trained in Reflect for ESOL teaching while teaching women from asylum backgrounds. bit.ly/reflect-esol-resource-pack

6. In the special issue you will see my name listed alongside the co-authors but with different roles – co-writer or editor – depending on what primary role I played in each article.

Displaced Syrian academics: unheard voices in academia

Ahmad Akkad

Multi-layered support is needed for displaced academics to be able to participate in academia and to be heard as academics in their own right – not only as displaced academics.

Syria has endured a conflict of almost 11 years, resulting in 6.8 million people having been displaced from Syria. This situation has generated an enormous amount of research – and research funding – into almost every part of these displaced individuals' lives. One area that has received scant attention, however, is the experiences of displaced Syrian academics globally. While research is therefore exploring the lives of Syrian refugees, it is not necessarily being conducted by or with those best placed to understand their dilemmas.

Stories shared by displaced Syrian academics in Europe and the Middle East illustrate how having a subordinate position in host countries impacts their participation and voice in academia and beyond.

This article draws on in-depth narrative interviews conducted between October 2021 and January 2022 with four displaced Syrian academics in different contexts.

Academia in exile
Various narratives of marginalisation and isolation from academic communities emerged from displaced Syrian academics. Many spoke of not having their skills and experience recognised (as is regularly observed with displaced populations) but also, more painfully, of having their level of qualification undervalued. They felt that they were generally seen as less qualified than 'local academics' in host countries, which resulted in them having lower positions and

statuses in contrast to what they would have in their home country. Amina, who is based in Germany, described not being accepted to work there despite her qualification as a highly experienced university lecturer in Syria: "I am psychologically affected because whatever position I apply for, whether it suits my qualifications or not, all I get is rejection!"

Others spoke of being excluded from academic communities because they are unable to speak the relevant language, which in turn is connected to other forms of racist discrimination. Adam, who is based in Turkey, explains: "Here, you frequently hear the phrase 'You, foreigner!'. Even now with my Turkish citizenship, this affects me. I was always looked up to by my students and colleagues, but this is no longer the case". Similarly, Sami recounts his inability to publish his manuscript in Turkey because of the requirement to use English to disseminate his research: "The main reason for not submitting publications nor getting published is my English which is not perfect, and the same applies to the majority of Syrian academics". As the dominant language for publications is English, displaced Syrian academics may be denied opportunities to disseminate their research unless they are given dedicated time and support to learn English.

Displaced Syrian academics also brought to light experiences of alienation and exclusion from the academic world in terms of knowledge production and dissemination. They spoke of how dominant theories and knowledge produced in Global North countries seem to be the norm and gain more attention in academia than knowledge produced in the Syrian context. Bazikh, who lives in France, stated: "All of the articles I have published so far were accepted by university journals in Syria as the international journals that I sent them to did not like the content and quality of my work". Local or Global South journals inevitably have far smaller readerships.

The current challenges faced by displaced academics globally, including Syrians, stem from a variety of factors including the interruption of their academic careers, the lack of recognition of their qualifications and documents, deskilling, psychological stress, difficulties in adaptation to a new society, limited employment with low pay, language learning barriers, bureaucratic constraints, and isolation from the academic community. Amina, comparing her precarious non-academic job with her previous position as a university lecturer in Syria, stated that: "It is a very uncertain job and does not give me security at all. […] At the same time, it is the only route I have to earn some money". Sami describes the challenges of policies dealing with refugees and foreign nationals: "As there is no equivalence of qualifications here in Turkey, many displaced Syrian academics are not conducting research, or they are only teaching, which can affect skills over time". In addition to these difficulties, displaced Syrian academics occupy precarious positions because of two major constraints: the ability to move freely and the lack of funding and support.

The ability to move
Being unable to move freely is a dominant constraint encountered by displaced Syrian academics as their development opportunities and needs are impacted by mobility constraints that differ from international academics who can often move more freely. Government policies on displaced persons' mobility are a major concern for displaced Syrian academics; their ability to participate in conferences and other academic events may be dependent upon being granted a visa, which may be difficult to obtain. Some countries, such as Qatar and the UAE, do not even allow entry to those who carry the label 'refugee'. It is noteworthy that the ability of academics to gain academic positions or promotion, or to obtain recognition within their field, comes through participation in international talks and networking at conferences and events, and the ability to secure these opportunities is considered a marker of academic prestige. Displaced academics may end up with CVs that lack such activities, which may disadvantage them from getting permanent academic positions. Nowadays, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a switch

to online events has facilitated attending different events and activities, and provided an inclusive environment for participation. However, it is unknown how long this will be the case. Those committed to supporting displaced academics should consider always having options for online participation.

On the other hand, some academic activities and projects require longer stays in a different country (such as having a postdoctoral position or joining a research project team) and this can be complicated and risky for displaced Syrian academics. Displaced academics may have to forfeit their right to residency and other advantages in their current host country if they spend a certain number of days abroad. Bazikh explained how French citizenship would allow him to seize academic opportunities without being concerned about issues of residency and mobility. He says: "I have been waiting for French citizenship to be able to move freely to different countries. Carrying this [Syrian] passport now would literally take me nowhere!".

Funding and support

The precarity of the academic job market, including short-term and low-paid contracts, is particularly detrimental to the careers of displaced academics for three main reasons. Firstly, many displaced Syrian academics are displaced with their families and are the sole or main breadwinner, and having short-term contracts may prove financially insufficient and insecure both personally and professionally. Secondly, their financial position is less secure than local scholars who might be more financially settled or more able to access resources that are not available to displaced scholars. Their position is also less secure than it was prior to being displaced as many academics leave Syria without savings and incur considerable expenses during their journey. People complain that academia now relies on having a higher earning partner, being young and without dependents, or even having some family money. Thirdly, taking temporary positions obliges displaced Syrian academics to spend valuable time searching for new opportunities, which can

impact their productivity. While this affects many academics who are not necessarily displaced, displaced Syrian academics (and particularly those who are older) need more time to compensate for the years of disruption to their career, as do other academics displaced due to conflicts of a protracted nature. Bazikh, who lives in France, says: "I had to start from scratch as if I had been in my twenties. I now feel uncertain about my future. I don't think I will have a pension like others [local academics] here, so I feel I will not be secure later...".

Funding for displaced academics, including Syrians, is often focused on particular jobs or projects that revolve around humanitarian or displacement-related issues. The rationale seems to be that all displaced people will want to research the politics or implications of their displacement. Some displaced Syrian academics reported the lack of funding for other fields of study, such as physics and chemistry.

NGOs such as the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) and the Institute of International Education (IIE) are providing different opportunities and funded research fellowships for displaced academics in different parts of the world. Even so, it is important to note that most of these opportunities are temporary.

Displaced academics also need support to successfully navigate unfamiliar higher education systems. Many displaced Syrian academics have gaps in their CVs because of the lack of funding, training or support to advance their academic profile, both in Syria and once they are displaced. Bazikh reported that "we, as displaced academics, may not be prepared well to compete with local academics". Career guidance for academics is often shared informally or during PhD programmes and is not easily accessible to displaced academics, hampering opportunities for promotion and success. Previously funded by an NGO in the UK, Hassan stated: "I did not have the right knowledge about how to produce publications with other researchers at university. I always feel like a guest waiting to be invited."

Conclusion

Multifaceted support is needed in many areas to facilitate the integration of displaced scholars into academia. Displaced academics should be welcomed not only to bring their lived experiences to research but also to join other intellectual communities as academics who bring a wealth of alternative types of knowledge and expertise that are not necessarily Eurocentric or Western in nature or related to displacement and humanitarianism.

Academic institutions, NGOs that help displaced scholars and even individual academics can act as an enabling force to offer support to displaced academics and help them thrive. Successful support or mentoring schemes could be created and expanded such as those developed by the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law or by CARA. These actors can offer sustainable mentoring programmes for displaced academics, who may themselves act as future mentors for subsequent cohorts of academics. Such programmes can provide considerable support to displaced academics professionally and personally and equip them with the necessary skills to progress.

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Exclusion from the conversation: reflections from Afghan refugees

Asma Rabi, Noor Ullah and Rebecca Daltry

While refugee voices are increasingly valued in research and policymaking, Afghan refugees continue to face barriers to access and participate in these conversations. Their insights offer recommendations for how to increase inclusion to inform decision making.

The challenge of increasing diversity and inclusion in global conversations about forced migration is widely recognised. Research and policy decision-making have tended to be led by actors who rarely originate from or represent the voices of people most directly affected by these decisions. There is, however, a growing call to recognise the value of inclusion and representation.

The participation of refugees as co-researchers has been identified as a potentially important means of increasing the sense of refugees' ownership and responsibility, building their skills and capacities, enabling critical reflection on research processes and maximising local participation.[1] This has been reflected in calls to create pathways to share academic knowledge from the Global South[2] and debunk traditionally pervasive assumptions that such research is of a lesser quality.[3] In policy spheres, there have been movements to reflect refugee participation in international mechanisms of decision-making, such as the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees.[4]

Two of the authors of this article are Afghan refugees; we recognise and have directly experienced, along with our peers, the challenge of making our voices heard within research and policymaking. We were born as refugees in Pakistan to families who had left Afghanistan seeking greater security and better lives for us. Having worked hard to pursue an education and now working as professional researchers, we are committed to being a voice for our often voiceless and underrepresented community. As of 2022, there are 2.6 million Afghan refugees worldwide, with another 3.5 million internally displaced, and these numbers are anticipated to rise. This article is rooted in the voices of our peers, providing lived examples of

the multi-layered barriers faced by Afghan refugees in this sector and our proposals for increasing the diversity of the conversation.

Challenges to joining the conversation

1. Barriers to education
Education is often seen to provide the foundational skills necessary to participate in research and policymaking. Attendance at a higher education institution and academic references are regularly cited as prerequisites for many job opportunities. However, accessing higher education is a major challenge for young refugees. In 2020, only 5% of refugees globally were enrolled in tertiary education, compared with a 39% enrolment rate among non-refugees.[5]

Lack of access to higher education is recognised by Afghan refugees to be a critical issue. The expense of university tuition is a key barrier to access, with many refugee families experiencing economic hardship and young people needing to find employment to support household income. Furthermore, in 2017 an estimated 600,000 to 1,000,000 Afghan refugees in Pakistan were undocumented and therefore unable to access higher education. This contributes in turn to a lack of employment opportunities, economic security and thus educational opportunities for the next generation.

2. Hostile local research cultures
Even with an undergraduate or master's degree, entering the research or policy sector is impeded by a lack of employment opportunities in Pakistan. Not only are there few research organisations, but visa and permit requirements are a major barrier for refugees. We have also noticed a clear research hierarchy within Pakistani universities, which makes it difficult to establish our position as researchers. Research supervisors often act as gatekeepers, determining what can or cannot be published and imposing their own perspective on research papers. This can result in the silencing of refugee perspectives within academia.

Despite holding a master's degree with a distinction in data science from a Pakistani university, Bilal (26 years old) has noticed a distinct lack of opportunities to work as a researcher, and has faced two key challenges. Firstly, local refugee communities attribute little importance to research. This is often due to the fact that refugees have a limited understanding of what research can achieve and therefore do not view it as a priority. Secondly, host communities may view refugee researchers as a potential threat to local livelihoods, which increases competition for research positions and may give rise to prejudice in application processes.

This silencing is further compounded by the instability felt by refugee communities. Due to the nature of a refugee's citizenship status, the personal risk incurred by entering into political or controversial conversations about forced migration means refugees may self-censor their work. This, combined with a lack of mentors or support systems at university, result in refugees not feeling encouraged to pursue research as a career path.

Nabi (33 years old) fled Afghanistan during the 1990s, and is currently working as a journalist, writing research articles for a local news agency. He loves writing due to the power and importance he attributes to sharing stories in the media. Despite this, he is highly aware of the censored nature of what he is able to publish as a refugee. He has faced personal threats when conducting research on certain topics and received a lack of support, even amongst his peers, for his work.

3. Lack of access to global platforms
In our experience, there are few opportunities in which refugees are afforded a voice in international conversations about research and policy. Despite declarations over the last decade requiring refugee participation in international organisations and networks, a number of barriers still exist. The high cost of attending international conferences or the lack of appropriate funding is one example. Likewise, travel restrictions placed on refugees can prevent access to such events. Setting minimum requirements for refugee participation therefore does not overcome every barrier. Efforts to increase access, such as removing travel

restrictions or increasing education and employment opportunities, would provide refugees with more autonomy to attend and contribute to international platforms.

*As a journalist and researcher seeking to showcase refugee voices, **Arya** (24 years old) was excited to have been invited to speak at an international education conference. However, her attendance was prevented by travel restrictions imposed on her as a refugee. In most countries, documented refugees are provided with the Geneva Convention travel document in lieu of a passport. On this occasion, however, the travel document was not granted, despite an official letter of confirmation from the international organisation holding the conference.*

4. Widespread discrimination
While some challenges arise at a local or global level, discrimination is a barrier we have faced at every level. Globally, the stereotyping of refugees has contributed to continuing negative attitudes. Whether in the media, political discourse or research itself, refugees are frequently presented as vulnerable, dependent and a potential threat to host communities. This can affect integration and inclusion. Afghan refugees are often the targets of criticism and prejudice from host communities in Pakistan. This can have a knock-on effect on employment opportunities and access to certain platforms, both within and beyond areas of research and policy.

   A second issue relates to language barriers. It is well recognised that academic publishing is dominated by the Global North, and it has been estimated that the average non-anglophone researcher makes approximately 60% of their journal submissions in English.[6] Although refugees are often multilingual, language can still be a major barrier to accessing and contributing to academic conversations.

Khalil (27 years old) cites discrimination as a key barrier to his career as a freelance researcher in Pakistan. He feels that his right to travel and work freely has been restricted by host community members and that he has been discriminated against due to his refugee status, with access to certain platforms and research opportunities denied

him. Nonetheless, he continues to value research as a means to change these attitudes and build a better society.

How to diversify the conversation?
If Afghan refugees – and the many other millions of displaced people worldwide – are to have a meaningful platform from which to influence the research and policy decisions which affect our communities, then steps need to be taken to increase inclusion in such conversations. While we recognise that our list of recommendations is not exhaustive, it is nonetheless important: it is rooted in the experience of those who have been excluded from the conversation in the past, rather than those seeking to fix it from the 'inside'.

Prioritise refugee education: The experiences of many Afghan refugees highlight that a lack of access to education (due to cost, documentation and references) is a major barrier to entering the fields of research and policymaking. Increasing access to education for refugees, and particularly access to higher education, is therefore a priority.

Establish awareness-raising initiatives to boost research engagement: We have noticed that local refugee communities do not tend to regard research as important, which only compounds the lack of refugee representation in global conversations. Increased information sharing and community workshops could act as a starting point to raise awareness of research findings and avenues through which to engage in research and policymaking.

Facilitate positive dialogue between refugee and host communities: Significant divides and prejudice among refugee and host communities in wider Pakistani society, worsened by Pakistan's economic crisis, contribute to continued exclusion of refugee voices within the research sector. An increased focus on constructive dialogue could help to address this and encourage collaboration between refugee and host communities.

Implement participatory research methodologies: Providing opportunities for refugees to actively participate as co-researchers could not only provide employment pathways but also enable refugees to share valuable insights and refine research methodologies in a way which is most appropriate for their context.

Recognise the twofold value of removing language barriers in research: We welcome the increasing efforts to diversify academic publishing. A greater range of languages and pathways to publication will likely result in more refugee voices being heard in research. Distribution of this research is also important; addressing the issue of academic paywalls, as well as publishing findings in accessible languages, would further increase refugees' engagement with the sector.

Combine requirements for refugee participation with practical support to implement them: Some declarations have been made to increase refugee participation in international networks, but there are barriers (including travel restrictions) which limit the success of implementing such standards. A dual approach is needed.

Enable networks for refugee collaboration and contribution: Refugees do not share one voice. We represent a diverse group of perspectives and experiences. Creating global networks through which refugees can communicate with one another could provide a platform for refugees not only to contribute to the conversation but to lead it.

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When displaced persons lead research: experience from East Africa

Abis Getachew, Mary Gitahi, Uwezo Ramazani and Andhira Yousif

Four displaced researchers who are leading a study on refugee-led organisations in East Africa discuss the benefits and challenges associated with being an 'insider' researcher.

Refugee researchers are typically included in research projects as assistants and data collectors rather than core or lead researchers. This can lead to exploitation and power imbalances between insider and outsider researchers in individual research projects and in the field of forced migration research.

We use the term 'insider researcher' to refer to any researcher who has lived experience of displacement, including refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, stateless persons and other groups that have been forcibly displaced or live in exile, whether they are still displaced or have resettled. We

use 'outsider researcher' for any researcher who does not have lived experience of displacement, whether they are based in Global North or Global South universities and research institutions. Our study is on the nature and impact of refugee-led organisations (RLOs) in East Africa led by displaced insider researchers from start to finish.[1] We explore the benefits and challenges associated with being an insider researcher and make the case for the need to support refugee-led research.

Benefits of being insider researchers

RLOs are an understudied topic in forced migration studies. Our initial desk review highlighted that there is limited available information about RLOs and the forms that they take in East Africa, especially in Tanzania and Ethiopia.[2] Our intimate knowledge of the refugee communities in the locations of the study was a clear benefit in helping us identify RLOs of diverse sizes and levels of influence when designing the study. We have strong insights into the social setting of the refugee community because of our lived experience as displaced persons. Some of us also have personal experience working or volunteering with RLOs. Many RLOs in our communities do not have an online presence, but we knew from experience that some of these smaller, less-resourced RLOs have a significant impact on individual refugees and refugee communities. Being familiar with the role of smaller RLOs convinced us of the need to include RLOs of different sizes and to examine in depth their impact on the refugee community.

Being insider researchers also created a feeling of ease between us and refugee participants. Refugee and RLO participants in our study felt more comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives with us. In contrast to outsider researchers, our shared background helped to create a good connection between us and the participants as the participants often mentioned that they were talking to peers. We hypothesise that this is due to their belief that we understand the potential repercussions of breaking their confidentiality as we would face the same problems if our own confidentiality

was broken. Furthermore, participants are more likely to believe that we will work hard to make sure their inputs are heard by stakeholders, including donors, international NGOs and government institutions, because we share the same challenges. Participants expect more honesty from us than from outsider researchers, as we are part of the community and have also experienced being interviewed and never being informed of the outcomes of the research.

Varied experience

Our team consists of four researchers with varied experiences of displacement and with different backgrounds. The lead researchers in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania still live in the country where they experienced displacement. In Uganda, the lead researcher is a Kenyan refugee in Nakivale refugee settlement. In Kenya, the lead researcher is a Sudanese refugee who has lived in both camp and urban settings, making it easier for her to relate to participants from both these settings. In Tanzania, the lead researcher is a former refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo based in Dar-es-Salaam.

By contrast, the Ethiopian lead researcher is a former refugee who has returned to Addis Ababa. Researchers who are still in the countries where they experienced or are experiencing displacement tended to be seen as peers by participants but the Ethiopian lead researcher was considered an outsider by refugees being hosted in Ethiopia because they did not share a nationality or language. As the researcher shared his experience as a refugee, however, participants saw him as someone who is both insider and outsider.

The gender of team members also had an impact on how we designed and conducted the study. With regard to diversity, women refugee lead researchers more deliberately looked for RLOs initiated by women, as they more easily identified with the challenges women RLO leaders faced, and such RLOs tend to be less visible than those led by men.

Challenges of being refugee researchers

We have faced several challenges that are specific to being insider researchers

and to our dual identity as displaced persons and professional researchers.

With regard to relations with participants, one challenge is that participants often assume that we understand all their difficulties and therefore sometimes omit information from the interviews. For instance, participants often make comments such as "you know what I mean", which suggests that some information has been left unsaid. We often have to probe further to ensure we understand the full picture. Likewise, there is a risk that we may be biased and assume that, given our shared experiences, participants' perspectives and opinions are the same as ours.

One of the most critical challenges we face is being recognised legitimate researchers by stakeholders such as international NGOs, UN agencies and government officials, despite having delivered a presentation at the side event on meaningful refugee participation at the 2021 UNHCR High-Level Official Meeting. While we have better access to the refugee community than outsider researchers, we struggle to secure interviews with local humanitarian stakeholders and often have to rely on non-refugee colleagues for introductions.

Conclusion

What makes our study different is that it is conducted by 'us', people with displaced backgrounds, from the start to the end: from developing research questions and methodology, to data collection and analysis, to report writing. Our study offers us an opportunity to enhance our research skills through supervision and mentorship from a pool of experienced non-refugee and refugee researchers. It also demonstrates that, given the right resources and support, refugee researchers can lead studies and contribute to knowledge production in the field of forced migration, thanks to our unique positionality.

Creating spaces for refugees to lead research, rather than just undertake fieldwork, will require adjustments within humanitarian research and academia and is beyond the control of individual researchers. To disrupt current patterns of exploitation

and power imbalances between insider and outsider researchers, we recommend that:

- Donors should fund refugee-led research in topics identified by refugee researchers in consultation with community members.

- International NGOs should consider refugee researchers as legitimate researchers and make themselves available to support research processes (such as in organising interviews and securing research permits).

- Outsider researchers should support refugee researchers through mentorship and in accessing research opportunities, particularly in spaces where power imbalances remain.

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1. The RLO study is led by Carleton University through the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN) and in partnership with the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at the University of Oxford. In East Africa, LERRN and RSC are also collaborating with the Dadaab Response Association (DRA), which leads a case-study in the Dadaab refugee camps as part of the RLO study. The study is supported, in part, by the Open Society Foundations and the International Development Research Centre.

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From coexistence to cohesion in refugee-host relations

Cory Rodgers

Improving 'cohesion' has become a common objective in refugee-hosting contexts. But the term is often used without clear definition, which has consequences for policy and programming.

Over the past decade there has been increasing attention to tensions between refugees and host communities, especially in contexts of protracted displacement. UNHCR has long recognised that mass displacement can have negative impacts on receiving communities. The 2016 New York Declaration recognised that most refugees live in low- and middle-income countries, where they are often seen as a strain on already over-burdened social infrastructure or as competitors for limited economic opportunities.

As early as the 1970s, the refugee aid and development agenda attempted to reduce these burdens by leveraging refugee assistance as an investment in local infrastructure.[1] Even in the absence of formal policy, UNHCR has introduced ad hoc entitlements to assistance in response to local demands, such as allowing host populations to access camp services or giving locals priority in employment opportunities.

Aside from concerns about the purported burden of hosting refugees, local communities may also display discriminatory attitudes based on race, ethnicity, religion, nationality or culture. These attitudes can be deeply entrenched, especially when they are grounded in painful memories of historical violence and injustice. For example, displaced Syrians in Lebanon are sometimes conflated with the Syrian regime that occupied the country from 1990 until 2005. In Kenya, Somali refugees have been treated as a security threat due to atrocities committed by Al Shabaab militants, including the 2012 Westgate mall attack and the 2015 Garissa University massacre.

There is nothing new about the problem of tension in refugee-hosting contexts. What is novel is the application of the concept

of 'cohesion' by refugee protection actors. In Bangladesh, declining tolerance among communities near the Cox's Bazaar camp has prompted calls for greater attention to social cohesion in aid programming.[2] At the Kalobeyei settlement in Kenya, a 2019 study commissioned by UNHCR investigated the impact of cash-based assistance on social cohesion.[3] And in the regional refugee response plans for Syria and Venezuela, aid actors are now incorporating cohesion into their programming in neighbouring countries.

In the past, refugee protection actors focused on conflict prevention, peace-making and 'coexistence'. These terms relate to mitigating tensions and instilling minimal values of tolerance. This is relatively modest compared to the agenda entailed by 'cohesion', which implies a more ambitious vision for the promotion of trust, social belonging, economic inclusion and political participation. Moreover, while coexistence pre-supposes that multiple groups are living alongside each other, cohesion de-emphasises the boundaries between these groups. The grammatical differences are telling: we speak of coexistence 'between' refugees and their hosts, but cohesion is encouraged 'within' a diverse community, as exemplified in the area-based approaches[4] to assistance that have become increasingly mainstream.

A fragmented and imported policy objective?

Although cohesion is increasingly prevalent in the refugee protection discourse, UNHCR has no formal policy on social cohesion. Rather, the concept appears across diverse policy domains, with differing and unarticulated definitions. The Global

Compact on Refugees (GCR) mentions cohesion as a potential benefit of sports and cultural activities. This defines cohesion primarily in terms of 'horizontal' or 'inter-communal' relations. However, UNHCR's Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People (AAP) requires that all communities (including hosts) be included in decision-making and feedback mechanisms to ensure that everyone has a voice in policy-making. This corresponds with the 'vertical' or 'community-to-institution' dimension of cohesion.

UNHCR has largely imported its policy approach to social cohesion through partnerships with other organisations. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was developed under the leadership of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and addresses cohesion more explicitly than the GCR, with Objective 16 committed to "Empower[ing] migrants and societies to realise full inclusion and social cohesion". IOM has made cohesion central to its migrant integration strategy and has launched an initiative on Diversity, Inclusion and Social Cohesion.[5]

Similarly, social cohesion is a long-standing element in the development strategies of UNDP and the World Bank. UNDP engages UNHCR through the Partnership on Forced Displacement, which informs the regional refugee response for Syria. The World Bank has partnered with UNHCR on its Development Responses to Displacement Impact Project in the East and Horn of Africa, as well as on its Window for Host Communities and Refugees.

Bringing coherence to cohesion policy
Although UNHCR draws on its partners' approaches to social cohesion, there is a need for a more explicit strategy about the specific role of social cohesion in UNHCR's mandate. Interviews with practitioners in Lebanon and Kenya have suggested widespread uncertainty and even disagreement about the meaning of cohesion, as well as about the ways that it could be integrated into refugee aid programming and measured for monitoring and evaluation.

Interviews with current and former UNHCR staff suggest that cohesion has a role to play in at least two of its Divisions. For the Division of International Protection, cohesion can help prevent harm to refugees in the places where they seek asylum. Host communities hostile to refugees or resentful about refugee-centric aid may take action against them, including through forced evictions, theft or even physical violence. If they feel that assistance is distributed unfairly, there is also a risk of host countries or communities taking action to prevent aid provision. Managing refugee-host tensions is therefore crucial to maintaining the 'protection space'.

For the Division of Resilience and Solutions, cohesion can contribute to the attainment of 'local solutions', defined by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies as "arrangements that do not replace but [rather] complement and facilitate access to durable solutions".[6] Refugees are often stuck in situations where full legal integration, including naturalisation, is not politically feasible in the short term. Here, social cohesion programmes push for a less ambitious aim of making exile more tolerable and facilitating limited forms of social and economic inclusion. When refugees can participate in the social, economic and political life of their host communities, they have greater capacity to pursue durable solutions on their own terms. This may create a stepping stone towards local integration, or a launch pad for either voluntary repatriation or the pursuit of complementary pathways to third countries.

Integrating cohesion into aid programming
With a clearer sense of policy aims, social cohesion objectives can be incorporated more coherently and effectively into refugee assistance programming. This includes developing the metrics upon which improvements in cohesion are measured, as well as the evidence upon which interventions are designed. Key questions requiring research and evidence include:

Does cohesion imply integration, inclusion or interaction? The term cohesion is applied to a broad array of intervention models. One approach is to invest in shared infrastructure such as roads, electrical grids and water systems and services such as education, health care and waste management, which can be put under pressure after the arrival of displaced populations. A second approach is to include hosts as beneficiaries in programmes that are conventionally intended for refugees. This approach responds to accusations of refugee-centric aid, and aims to reduce resentment among the host population. However, the logic of programmes supporting this approach is skewed toward economic perspectives – that is, measures of the costs and benefits of hosting – rather than anthropological and sociological perspectives. A third model focuses on increasing and improving interactions among different communities. This approach is supported by studies that show a positive correlation between interactions and inter-group perceptions.

Should cohesion be a distinct area of programming, or mainstreamed into other sectors? Some projects take cohesion as the primary objective, such as those focused on peace education, dispute resolution mechanisms, and community dialogue. But many projects have incorporated cohesion into other sectors, such as infrastructure projects that employ both refugees and locals during construction, or livelihood projects that extend business support to both groups.

Should cohesion programmes be targeted? Whereas some approaches to social cohesion programming are broadly inclusive or community-wide, others focus on targeted sub-populations. Vulnerability-based programmes presume that the worst-off members of the host population are the most likely to mobilise over accusations of refugee-centric assistance. Including them as aid recipients therefore reduces tensions over aid distribution. Some projects target youth as the most likely to engage in physical confrontations; others engage women as potential bridge-builders between communities.

How are tension and cohesion best monitored? Monitoring social tensions often relies on perception surveys, which elicit sentiments about members of other groups. However, such surveys often rely on abstract categories based on nationality or legal status, which prime respondents to think in terms of stereotypes rather than their actual relationships with real people.[7]

Finally, what are the unintended effects of managing refugee-host relations? It is sometimes assumed that increased attention to host communities is a step in the right direction. But extending aid to local citizens risks side-stepping the state and driving up future expectations for 'host entitlements', which forces refugee protection organisations to deviate from their mandate and increases costs. These additional costs could undermine the protection space in an already under-funded aid system. Additionally, such entitlements can create further tensions within the host population.[8] Refugee-host tensions are inherently political, and attempts to address them can further politicise existing labels.

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Evolution of the stability sector in Lebanon: the role of civil society

Dawn Chatty

In recent decades, civil society has played a fundamental role in supporting social stability in Lebanon, including efforts at improving social cohesion between different groups.

Lebanon has recently experienced multiple crises: the COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented currency collapse, nationwide protests against a corrupt sectarian state, and the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020. State and humanitarian actors have therefore become increasingly concerned about inter-communal tensions and other threats to national stability, most recently between Lebanese nationals, displaced Syrians, and stateless people. Policy discourse in the country has focused on occasional – and often isolated – outbreaks of collective violence, as well as on a Tension Monitoring System administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). But there is limited scrutiny of what 'stability' has meant and continues to mean in Lebanon and how it is experienced by different groups.

These concerns build upon a much longer history of attempts by external actors to promote stability across the different ethnoreligious groups in Lebanon.[1] In 1860, France sent troops to quell the fighting between the Maronite Christian and Druze population of Mount Lebanon. After World War I, France created 'Greater' Lebanon, a new nation-state with a sectarian system of governance that regularly broke down. The civil war between 1975 and 1989 saw fighting both between and within various Christian and Muslim factions. The Syrian military then occupied Lebanon until 2005. This convoluted political history has resulted in serious concerns among civil society and government about tensions among the different groups that make up the Lebanese population.

Displaced Syrians in Lebanon

The concerns about the de-stabilising effects of displacement from Syria must be understood in the light of this history. Since 2011, 1.1 million displaced Syrians have entered Lebanon, who now make up 25% or more of Lebanon's current population. Refugee movements on such a scale elsewhere might well have triggered a major internal security operation or even military action. In Lebanon, however, the government's 'humanitarian' response has been minimal, with Syrians largely receiving assistance from international and nongovernmental organisations. Lebanon's political parties and population are split between supporters and opponents of the Assad government in Syria.[2] UNHCR's request to set up refugee camps for the displaced Syrians was rejected for fear that this might result in outbreaks of violence and undermine social cohesion in Lebanon. Such violence had erupted previously: in Karantina, a Palestinian refugee camp which was razed to the ground at the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, and in 1982 when Israeli forces backed Christian Lebanese militias in their massacre of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

In such a divided context, the survival of the state relies upon the idea that civil rather than customary or religious governance benefits the 'common good'. Civil society actors have made significant efforts to maintain and extend ties across Lebanese political and religious groups. The recent Syrian influx can best be understood by examining this search for stability which is intrinsic to the historical nature of the governance structure over the past century.

Displaced Syrians in Lebanon span the socio-economic spectrum: from millionaires to poor, unskilled labourers. In addition to a large number of Lebanese NGOs set up to assist displaced Syrians, many of the better-off Syrians in Lebanon have created NGOs to help Syrians cope with impoverishment,

lack of access to government services and the uncertainty of life in exile. Although there have been instances of violence against displaced Syrians, such as a mass eviction in Bsharre and the burning of shelters in Bhanine in late 2020, these are few and far between. Even the large-scale imposition of night-time curfews on Syrians often reflect positioning among pro- and anti-Assad Lebanese political parties, rather than a direct response to individual displaced Syrians.

Until very recently there were no visa restrictions between the two countries, allowing Syrians to easily enter and remain in Lebanon. Before 2011, half a million Syrian workers formed an essential part of the Lebanese agricultural and construction industries. These mainly male workers brought their families to join them once it became too dangerous to stay in Syria. Therefore, the majority of displaced Syrians in Lebanon are familiar to the Lebanese people, but nonetheless are separate from them[3]. It is this separateness that has made efforts to bring hosts and refugees together so difficult.

Civil society encouraging social cohesion

Over the decades, most social cohesion projects in Lebanon have been directed at bridging divides between the country's various ethno-religious sects and sect-based political parties. Displaced Syrians have rarely been involved in these projects, either in designing or in benefitting from them. Many of these projects have focused particularly on youth, including United Lebanese Youth Project, Tomorrow's Youth Organization, Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training, and Youth Development Organization.

Increasingly cohesion and stability projects have attempted to address relations between displaced Syrians and Lebanese host communities. In 2015, actors including government ministries, national NGOs, and international organisations came together to form a 'Stability Sector' aimed at addressing these inter-communal tensions. Their activities included establishing a Tension Monitoring System administered by UNDP. Research by the 'Social Cohesion

Across the Beqaa Valley in eastern Lebanon, tens of thousands of Syrians have taken up residence in tented settlements, just kilometres from the border with Syria (credit: Watfa Najdi)

as a Humanitarian Objective' project[4] has identified various strategies to encourage more welcoming attitudes towards Syrians in Lebanon. Some programmes that were originally designed to provide aid solely to refugees have incorporated Lebanese beneficiaries. Other programmes have created spaces for positive interaction between hosts and displaced Syrians, in the hope of building social connections and trust. These have been led by NGOs and international organisations such as the Norwegian Refugee Council and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Stability in Lebanon is hardly threatened by the large number of Syrians it hosts, as many have long-established social ties and kinship in the country. Exclusion and hostility across sects have been a steadfast part of Lebanon's short history as a nation-state. Its response to displaced people, including Armenians, Palestinians, Iraqis and now Syrians, has been marked by discrimination. However, solidarity and support for displaced Syrians relies heavily on the role of civil society. Many of the most successful initiatives have been collaborations between Syrian and Lebanese actors. Two NGOs, Multi Aid Programs and Basmeh & Zeitooneh, for example, were founded by upper- and middle-class Syrians and were offered significant start-up support by members of Lebanon's civil society. The often closely related and intertwined Syrian and Lebanese civil society actors share the same goals; maintaining stability in the country that has provided asylum to so many displaced Syrians. Civil society is fundamental to the aims of the 'stability sector' in Lebanon.

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Aid tensions after the 2020 Beirut port explosion

Watfa Najdi

Tensions can intensify in contexts of overlapping crises: humanitarian actors must recognise the different kinds of tension resulting from aid distribution and respond accordingly.

In August 2020, a massive explosion tore through north-eastern Beirut, damaging tens of thousands of homes and buildings. As humanitarian assistance poured into the affected neighbourhoods, there was widespread public scrutiny about how aid was targeted and distributed. Amidst a broader context of financial, political and health crises, state and humanitarian actors became increasingly concerned about inter-communal tensions.

The experience of tension in Bourj Hammoud

According to Tension Monitoring Surveys administered by UNDP, social tensions intensified following the explosion, especially between Lebanese nationals and Syrian refugees, both of whom experienced heightened socio-economic vulnerability. Both groups felt that aid had been unfairly distributed. Paradoxically, many Syrians felt discriminated against by providers of assistance, while many Lebanese complained that Syrians received an undue portion of aid.

While 'tensions' are extensively monitored in Lebanon, there has been limited ethnographic research on the experience of tension or its complex relationship with various forms of identity, such as sect, nationality, or class. To explore this issue from an ethnographic lens, I initiated a participatory research project in June 2021 with 9 residents of Bourj Hammoud, a

refugee- and migrant-hosting neighbourhood affected by the blast. Bourj Hammoud was established in the early 1900s as a place of refuge for Armenians displaced by the genocidal campaigns conducted by the Ottoman empire. It now accommodates diverse low-income groups including Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, and Iraqi refugees as well as migrant workers from Africa and Asia. Although the neighbourhood offers employment opportunities and relatively affordable housing, it is identified as a poor area predominantly inhabited by refugees, with crumbling infrastructure and inadequate urban services.[1]

Perceptions of unfair aid distribution
Reflecting on the aftermath of the Beirut blast, research participants recalled accusations and resentment across lines of nationality and legal status. One Lebanese contributor explained that "Lebanese citizens were angry and frustrated that Syrian refugees were getting aid". On the contrary, a Syrian contributor identified a false perception that aid was given to Syrians more than others. "Most assistance targeted Lebanese citizens only", she added. Such stereotypes, often imposed on both citizens and foreign nationals, were used by certain individuals, media outlets and political actors. Not for the first time, rumours were woven into politicised aid narratives and circulated to aggravate anti-refugee sentiments towards Syrians and to push for their return.

These perceptions of unfair aid distribution added to longer standing tensions within Bourj Hammoud, especially in regard to an area called Naba'a. Administratively, Naba'a falls within the Bourj Hammoud Municipality. However, this area is home to a high concentration of refugees and Shi'ite residents, who stand out within the predominantly Christian population of eastern Beirut. For this reason, some see Naba'a as existing 'outside' Bourj Hammoud, reflecting the importance of religion and nationality as a basis for exclusion. One contributor explained, "Bourj Hammoud is divided in terms of interactions… The quarters and the buildings are segregated

according to people's nationalities and religious beliefs". This sense of spatial division and conflicting communal identities in Bourj Hammoud generates antipathy, particularly when it comes to divergent narratives about aid bias.

However, intercommunal divides between sects and nationalities – what is often called the *horizontal* dimension of most social cohesion frameworks – do not fully capture the image of 'tension' that emerged from this study. Much anger was directed at the institutions responsible for targeting and distributing aid – what is often called the *vertical* dimension. After the explosion, the army and various NGOs visited people's houses to record the damage and provide financial assistance for repairs. According to our contributors, these assessments were uncoordinated and lacked clear criteria for targeting aid. Both Lebanese and non-Lebanese contributors described witnessing evidence of aid bias based on nationality. An Iraqi contributor explained that even though her apartment was more damaged than others in her building, the Lebanese Army gave her family 500,000 LBP, whereas all Lebanese families received 4,000,000 LBP. Meanwhile, a Lebanese contributor complained that Syrians can access more funding than Lebanese, despite the economic challenges faced by both groups. Conversely, a Syrian contributor wrote that her family was considered "ineligible to receive any financial assistance because as Syrians they should be getting aid from UNHCR".

Vertical or horizontal?
To avoid exacerbating refugee-host tensions, these *vertical* (provider-beneficiary) dimensions must be recognised alongside *horizontal* (inter-communal) dimensions. However, despite the rise in tensions following the blast, there were no major incidents of physical violence between refugees and hosts. Our refugee contributors generally described Bourj Hammoud as a place of diversity and tolerance, where bonds have emerged through cooperative interactions and shared hardships. During our research, we heard numerous examples

of everyday cross-communal solidarity, such as borrowing money from a neighbour or offering support for a classmate after the loss of a relative. However, when anger is directed upwards to institutions – whether the state, local NGOs, or international actors – it risks being deflected laterally to neighbours. It is therefore crucial that aid actors recognise vertical tensions in their conflict sensitivity frameworks and respond to crises accordingly. This might involve working with state actors to introduce a more comprehensive social protection system[2] as well as learning from and supporting existing solidarity mechanisms, which tend to provide a more contextualized and conflict-sensitive response[3]. Additionally,

adopting more systematic and transparent targeting methods could help aid actors to address tensions resulting from perceptions of unfair aid distribution.

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Incoherent policies and contradictory priorities in Kenya

Michael Owiso

Since 2013, Kenya has embraced contradictory policies to manage its refugee affairs, with simultaneous calls for encampment, socio-economic integration and camp closure that affect both refugees and host communities.

Policies should aim to realise a people or a group's aspirations. However, in politically complex institutional environments, the design and adoption of policies may lose sight of common goals. Since the 1990s, Kenya has enforced a strict policy of refugee encampment. Then in 2017, in an apparent turn towards integration, Kenya became a pilot roll-out country of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)[1] and pledged to pursue self-reliance and socio-economic integration for refugees. The 2021 Refugees Act embraced both integration and encampment in a confusing combination of seemingly contradictory policy orientations.[2] Further complicating the situation, the central government has made repeated calls to close the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, which host over 80% of refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya.

In light of these contradictions, how should we understand the Kenyan government's commitments? How do

these policies affect refugee-host relations? This article draws upon interviews and discussions with refugees and host community members in Kakuma, as well as aid providers, to describe the divergent policy space that has emerged.

Incompatible policies: encampment, integration and camp closure

Before Kenya passed its first comprehensive refugee law in 2006, refugees were free to move, work and integrate into Kenyan society. This policy came under scrutiny in the 1990s, following the arrival of large numbers of refugees escaping war and famine in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Somalia. The Dadaab and Kakuma camps were created in northern Kenya during this influx. Kenya has since accommodated a rising number of refugees and asylum seekers through a strict encampment policy that limits movement, with restrictions particularly focused on Somali refugees.

The markets in Kakuma refugee camp bustle with social interaction and economic exchange among refugees as well as Kenyans, but lack infrastructure due to the government's insistence that the camp remain temporary (Credit: Asrat Tolossa)

Despite enforcing encampment, Kenya adopted the CRRF in 2017, pledging to incorporate refugee assistance into its national development plans and to ensure that refugees, returnees, hosts and others living in displacement-affected areas have equal opportunities to achieve self-reliance and well-being. CRRF implementation took centre-stage in the refugee-hosting counties of Garissa and Turkana, which have each established local socio-economic development plans.[3] Kenya has also been a leader in associated regional agreements such as the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education.

However, Kenya has repeatedly announced its intention to close its camps, with the aim of returning most camp residents to their country of origin. When attempting to close the Dadaab camps in April 2015 and again in 2016, the Kenyan government cited terrorist attacks and national security concerns related to the Somalia-based insurgent group Al-Shabaab. In March 2021, Kenyan authorities issued a 14-day ultimatum to UNHCR to develop a plan to close both Dadaab and Kakuma camps.

Policy contradictions

The relationship between these three policies – encampment, integration, and camp closure – generates three contradictions. The first and most evident is between encampment and camp closure. The second is between encampment and socio-economic integration. Although Kenya has committed to promoting refugee self-reliance, its encampment policy criminalises movement outside the camps without a pass and its Immigration Law creates barriers to secure legal employment. These restrictions greatly hamper refugees' prospects for economic integration and self-reliance.[4]

The third and most striking policy contradiction is between integration and camp closure. The government has called repeatedly for camp closure despite Kenya being a signatory to a range of international and regional instruments to provide for and

facilitate refugee integration. Interviews in July 2021 revealed the same confusion among refugees, many of whom feel destabilised by the news. As one recent arrival in the Kalobeyei Settlement explained:

I heard in the news that Dadaab and Kakuma will be closed. I was surprised. We were recently relocated here to the Kalobeyei Settlement, and now they want to close all the camps?

The calls for closure have had serious social, psychological and economic repercussions. Many respondents explained that it has taken time for them to develop personal networks which would be broken if the camps were closed. Others asked what would happen to those who have married members of a different nationality: might targeted returns divide their families?

Resolving the contradictions?

The contradictions in Kenya's refugee policies originate from its intention to respond to protracted refugee hosting while embracing evolving international regimes such as the CRRF. Kenya needs to harmonize its legal and regulatory frameworks around refugee hosting in order to achieve a reasonable level of policy coherence.

Most recently, attention has turned to the 'Marshall Plan for Africa', within which the Kenyan government has proposed to transition Dadaab and Kakuma camps into Refugee Villages that will provide infrastructure in education, health, water, energy, security and conservation in designated areas.[5] The roadmap agreed with UNHCR makes provisions for voluntary safe returns, departures to third countries and options for refugees from the East African Community (EAC) to apply for Kenyan citizenship. Under this plan, those seeking asylum in Kenya would in theory enjoy freedom of movement and the right to employment, education and healthcare as well as the right to start a business.

To bolster the transition from camps to Refugee Villages and empower refugees to pursue self-reliance and contribute to the host economy, refugees should also be provided with land to farm and construct

shelters. However, the Marshall Plan is silent on "the control of designated areas" which is entrenched in the 2021 Refugees Act[6]. The second contradiction – between encampment and socio-economic integration – is thus maintained. The Marshall Plan also excludes Somali refugees from the naturalisation option because Somalia is not a member of the EAC. Third-country resettlement rates are likely to be low, which leaves Somali refugees largely with one option: voluntary repatriation. But following the history of voluntary returns to Somalia since 2014, many who return would likely make their way back to Kenya because of challenges related to insecurity, lack of economic opportunities and access to services such as education.[7]

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The politics of sharing aid with host communities

Ekai Nabenyo

Extending refugee aid and services to host communities is a strategy to preserve the humanitarian 'protection space', but may drive unrealistic expectations for host entitlements.

In many contexts of large-scale protracted displacement, the distribution of humanitarian aid can become highly contentious, especially where local people face their own economic challenges and vulnerabilities but do not qualify for refugee assistance. In order to counter this resentment, which can impinge on the ability of humanitarian organisations to fulfil their protection mandate, aid actors have responded by including locals as beneficiaries and leveraging the aid economy to support local development. But as suggested by the history of the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, this strategy to reduce tension brings additional risks in the long term.

Refugee-host relations in Turkana County

For decades, refugee-host relations at Kakuma camp have been beset by low-level tensions. When confrontations occur, these tensions can quickly escalate to violence. In 2017, a refugee student from the neighbouring Eastern Equatoria region of South Sudan attacked and killed five Turkana students and a night guard in a high school near Lokichoggio, about 100km from Kakuma. The attacker was taken into police custody, but was then seized from his cell and killed by a local mob.[1] In 2018, Somali refugees marched towards Kakuma town to protest the lack of camp security following a spate of night-time robberies, rapes and murders. They were met at the Tarac River by Turkana protesters concerned that the refugees posed a threat to local businesses. Military intervention was required to keep the two parties separate. More recently, the growing profile of members of the LGBTIQ+ community within the camp has provoked anger and resulted in some violent incidents perpetrated against them by local people.[2]

One particular source of tension is that many local people feel that they have not meaningfully benefited from the refugees' presence, despite giving up their land and pastures as the camp was constructed. Moreover, from the perspective of Turkana people, who practice a communal way of life and share available resources, it is immoral that refugees are guaranteed a baseline of support from UNHCR while locals struggle with meagre government support. This sentiment is captured succinctly in a narrative that emerged in the early 2000s, which suggested that it is better to be a refugee than a Turkana in Kakuma.[3]

Formally, UNHCR's mandate is to provide protection to refugees, whereas local community concerns fall under the remit of the national and county governments. But for much of Kenya's history, Turkana was neglected in the national development agenda. When the UNHCR set up its operations in Kakuma and began providing aid to foreigners living in Turkana territory, many locals felt a sense of exclusion that was amplified by the longer history of marginalisation.

Cohesion in law and programming

Humanitarian organisations have responded with efforts to mitigate tensions and promote positive relations between refugees and the Turkana community, usually under the banner of 'peaceful coexistence'.[4] Initially, this involved ad hoc arrangements that opened access to refugee programmes and services for local Kenyans. More recently, such arrangements have been formalised in policies such as the 2016 Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the 2018 Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan.[5] Peaceful coexistence has also been codified in law through the 2021 Refugees Act, where several articles specify strategies for promoting peace, including the shared use of public institutions, facilities

and spaces between refugees and host communities. Many of these objectives align with the emerging 'social cohesion' agenda in refugee policymaking, although in Kenya the older terminology has stuck.

One problem is that as peaceful cohesion has been formalised and normalised in Kenya's refugee policy framework, there have been growing expectations for 'host entitlements'. As in other refugee-hosting areas such as Dadaab in Garissa County, locals in Kakuma have increasingly used advocacy and sometimes even violence to demand benefits from the organisations that operate in their territory. Humanitarian actors have raised concerns about these interruptions to their work. Some of these activities have been organised by local political actors hoping to position themselves as community advocates. Others have attempted to direct 'host entitlements' such as jobs or construction tenders to their own networks. This politicisation of aid has been accompanied by disappointment due to unmet expectations of host benefits as well as dissatisfaction about the unequal enjoyment of benefits across the different strata of the Turkana population.[6]

Taking forward the 'peaceful coexistence' agenda in Kenya

Despite these complications, the peaceful coexistence agenda in Turkana holds promise. There is a long history of trade, economic cooperation, and even marriage between refugees and hosts. But policymakers need to strengthen the legal basis of refugees' belonging in Kenya. Despite efforts to provide refugees with small-scale economic opportunities within the camp area, refugees are still denied freedom of movement and the right to work, unless they seek special permits. Coexistence objectives require some level of equality across different groups, which must be anchored in legal rights for refugees.

Relatedly, peaceful coexistence projects have thus far focused heavily on the economic dimensions of host-refugee relations, which include leveraging aid as an investment in local development. But investing aid

in local development renders the camp a resource for hosts, which risks refugees being seen less as co-inhabitants and more as a commodity. While the host community may be happy for refugees to stay, they may also become accustomed to encampment and oppose granting greater rights for refugees, which would disperse refugees – and the benefits that accompany their presence – to Nairobi and elsewhere in Kenya. Such an attitude may actually work against efforts to promote social cohesion in the long term.

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Measuring social cohesion: lessons from Kakuma Camp

Stephen Hunt and Cory Rodgers

Various surveys have been constructed to measure social cohesion in contexts of displacement. But the results must be interpreted carefully by those seeking to inform policy and programming.

With the increased attention paid to social cohesion in refugee policy, there is greater need for robust methods of measuring cohesion among displaced and displacement-affected communities. At the project level, organisations that have adopted social cohesion goals into their programming require indicators for project evaluation. At the national and sub-national levels, monitoring mechanisms such as UNDP's Regular Perception Surveys in Lebanon are gathering data on cohesion and tension to improve conflict sensitivity among aid actors.[1] And at the broadest level, funding bodies such as the World Bank are investing in research to generate evidence on the factors that influence cohesion in contexts of displacement, which could be used to develop best practices for programme design.[2]

In Kenya, the World Bank has played an important role in supporting the socio-economic integration agenda pursued by the government and UNHCR. This includes research on social cohesion in urban and camp contexts. Questions on cohesion have been incorporated into various surveys conducted by the Bank and its partners,[3] including large-scale socio-economic assessments of the refugee populations in the Kakuma camps and Kalobeyei Settlement.[4]

Research instruments to study cohesion must be designed with attention to the particular institutional landscapes and policy priorities in any given context. For example, in the 1990s, social cohesion in Canada, the EU and other high-income countries was defined with a strong emphasis on equality. But in Kenya, refugees have a subordinated legal status and are subjected to strict encampment policies. The integration agenda is restricted to socio-economic dimensions, including the promotion of self-reliance for refugees and merging humanitarian and national service provision into joint systems. As such, a survey question asking refugees in Kenya about their sense of 'equality' would seem out of touch. 'Cohesion' only really makes sense in regard to the expectations that people have for their place in a community, which is shaped by unequal legal statuses and the policy environments in which they find themselves. These factors, among others, complicate the ways that people interpret and respond to survey questions about social cohesion.

In 2022, the 'Social Cohesion as a Humanitarian Objective'[5] research team developed a strategy for assessing social cohesion research instruments used in Kakuma. We conducted a standard survey with a small but diverse sample of 30 respondents, immediately followed by an open-ended interview. The validity of common survey questions was evaluated based on similarities and differences between survey responses and how people described refugee-host relations in their own words.

In many cases, we found that an individual's survey responses were inconsistent with their interview comments. For example, in the survey, one South Sudanese respondent disagreed with a statement that the host community is trustworthy. But in the interview, he provided an optimistic image of "peace and unity among the refugees and Kenyans". Conversely, when asked about the trustworthiness of refugees, one Kenyan man responded positively. But in the interview, he signalled caution: "[Refugees] ask us to join them [on the football pitch], but we know that they are problematic people. So we refuse."

These observations highlight one pervasive problem with how social cohesion data is gathered: the closed-ended survey format. Respondents are often required to choose between binary options (yes or no) or to rate their sentiments on a scale (such as from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'). But people's perspectives on their social environments are often too complex or context-dependent to be captured in this way. As one South Sudanese woman explained when asked about relations between refugees and the local community:

There are some good things about the way people stay together here, but sometimes conflicts arise. God created people differently. Some are criminals, while others say people should live in peace. A criminal or a drunkard will bring chaos and disagreement between people. It is not all of them, but this is the problem.

Such ambiguity is oversimplified when responses are restricted to linear scales or reduced to a simple position like 'high trust' or 'low trust'. Similarly, broad categories like 'refugees' and 'host community' sometimes encompass too much diversity to elicit a meaningful response on a perception survey. In our interviews in Kakuma, assessments of the 'trustworthiness' of refugees varied drastically depending on which demographics were specified. Similarly, when asked about their own community, local Kenyan respondents highlighted the different motivations and lifestyles of those living near the camp and those living further away across the river.

Pending a full analysis, several key lessons emerge from a preliminary review of our findings:

Metrics for social cohesion must be adapted to each context. Questions that seem obvious may be interpreted differently by various groups. For example, some surveys ask if the respondent ever shares meals with people from other communities, an act assumed to measure intimacy. But in Kakuma, refugees often exchange meals for firewood and charcoal sold by locals. These interactions are more transactional and less intimate than imagined during survey design. Qualitative research is crucial to developing social cohesion indicators relevant to each context. This includes both preliminary ethnographic research to inform survey design and post-design qualitative validation to understand how the questions are interpreted.

Analysis of perception surveys should focus on extreme answers. In our study, those who provided moderate responses to survey questions about the trustworthiness of other communities often conveyed ambiguity or ambivalence during the interviews. But those who provided more extreme answers had stronger alignment between their survey and interview responses.

Perception surveys are a very limited measure of cohesion. Consider a survey that asks about the trustworthiness of refugees: even if 90% of the responses are very negative, this does not provide a reliable guide to actual practices of trust and cooperation in everyday life, such as lending money or sharing personal information. Responses to questions about abstract categories of people are shaped by contemporary stereotypes and popular narratives. The responses tend to be different if interview questions ask about individuals, such as neighbours, co-workers or friends. Perception indicators should therefore be accompanied by more specific measures of cohesion, such as the extension of credit or marital ties across communal lines. However, such measures require a concrete vision for how a more cohesive refugee-hosting society should look, which is often lacking in programme design and policy-making.

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Reflections on approaches and barriers to reconciliation

Danielle Vella and Diana Rueda

In a series of working discussions, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has identified common barriers to reconciliation. Making progress to overcome these barriers starts with individuals.

The concepts of reconciliation and social cohesion are intimately linked: reconciliation is a process of "recreating right relationships", with oneself and with others[1], and social cohesion is the glue that holds these relationships together. Both entail a complex and at times discordant array of objectives that include peace and harmony as well as justice and accountability.

In 2018, JRS adopted 'Reconciliation' as a pillar of its strategic framework. This conceptual framework mirrors John Paul Lederach's vision of reconciliation as a space for the values of truth, mercy, justice and peace.[2] An emphasis on non-violence underpins this framework, as do guiding principles that highlight equitable participation, restorative justice, and a universally shared humanity.

Many communities we work with, which are either suffering extreme violence or offering refuge to people displaced by it, dispute whether reconciliation is feasible. Although each context is unique, common barriers to reconciliation have emerged from JRS workshop discussions.

Common barriers to reconciliation
One barrier emerges when identity differences and power asymmetries are exploited, leading to feelings of 'superiority versus inferiority' that cause marginalisation, discrimination and oppression. This results in violent division between groups, reinforced by narratives that dehumanise and even demonise others.

Another barrier to reconciliation is frustration at feelings of powerlessness to stop violence and injustice. When legitimate, non-violent means of protest are brutally suppressed, the use of violence as a last resort is more likely to emerge, as is a transition from self-defence to vengeance. In contexts where there is often neither the space nor the resources to heal wounds, unhealed pain can perpetuate cycles of violence: "pain that is not transformed is transferred".[3]

To meet these challenges, JRS adapts to local realities and sets manageable expectations. We listen to diverse voices, with patience and without imposing our own views. We acknowledge calls for justice even if we might be woefully unable to support their fulfilment. We do not even mention the word 'reconciliation' if it is deemed unhelpful or will provoke scepticism.

JRS tries to work through barriers with individuals and communities, starting at the personal level. This journey is non-linear, but trust is the ultimate destination. Every step, however modest, is progress. We begin by encouraging critical self-awareness and proceed with cultivating tolerance, being willing to listen to and respect opposing views, and with time, developing empathy.

Reconciliation in action: the experience of JRS teams
In Myanmar, online sessions organised by JRS have nourished participants' conviction that inner personal transformation remains possible even in unchangeable situations.

The JRS Country Director, Rosalyn, said: "I believe reconciliation may happen at different levels. We cannot affect things outside of our control. Focusing on certain things like self-care, knowing and managing my emotions and responding well to incidents helps me a lot in my work and in dealing with others."

Reflecting their contexts, our teams are understandably affected by communal tensions. In northern Ethiopia, the JRS Reconciliation Coordinator, Million, said politics and ethnicity had long impacted team dynamics. "We used to organise team-building exercises and sessions on reconciliation, which were effecting positive change," recalls Million. "We used to cook and eat together and watch similar media sources." However, this growing trust plummeted when war erupted in Tigray between Ethiopian security forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). "News media and propaganda, identity politics and history affected relationships. The team split into two," said Million.

Then, the team attended a three-day meeting away from the conflict zone. "We created a safe, shared space with ground rules. Everyone shared how the conflict affected them personally," continued Million. "[We] realised that while every individual and each experience was unique, there were many shared emotions, especially fear and worry."

Among many others, Million had to leave Tigray because of his identity: "When we tried to leave, one TPLF administrator who knew us through our work put himself at risk to help us. We cannot generalise individuals or groups. There are good people everywhere. Our identity, experiences and perceptions create our reality. We need to prioritise the value of our shared humanity over our differences."

Claudine, JRS Reintegration Coordinator in Burundi, previously worked in northern Uganda with South Sudanese refugees and local communities. "We brought together a group of young people of different ethnicities from refugee and host communities. Session by session, we observed the creation of a team. At first, they didn't feel comfortable around one another and were afraid, but this changed with time and they developed

Participants at a JRS Reconciliation Workshop in Adjumani, northern Uganda, form a circle to reflect on their discussions during the closing session (credit: Diana M. Rueda Vargas)

concern for one another. When a young man was wounded in a big clash between the host community and refugees, the group kept each other informed." Claudine says she has seen "tolerance evolve to acceptance, mistrust to trust". She continues: "After the clash, the youth said they will no longer be manipulated by the narratives of their elders. By listening to each other, they were able to change their perspectives towards each other."

These experiences illustrate progress along enduring journeys of reconciliation. Rosalyn from Myanmar defined it this way: "Once ruptured, relationships will not be 100% healed. They may need to be reshaped and renewed. We need to know how to repair ruptures so that we are able to tolerate each other's differences without tolerating injustice and inhuman acts and to respond without violence or revenge."

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1. This relational definition of reconciliation finds justification and promotion in religious and secular understandings of reconciliation. The Catholic Church emphasises "right relations" – an understanding echoed by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) that talks about relationships with God, with oneself, with others and the environment.

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Forced Migration Review in other languages

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The Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN)

LERRN is a team of researchers and civil society partners committed to promoting protection and solutions with and for refugees. Their goal is to ensure that refugee research, policy and practice are shaped by a more inclusive, equitable and informed collective engagement of civil society.

In 2021-2022, LERRN and the Refugee Research Network (RRN) co-hosted a series of monthly webinars addressing the ethics of forced migration research at various stages of the research process, available at *www.carleton.ca/lerrn/learn-with-lerrn/webinars*.

LERRN also collaborates with Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT), an international initiative working to amplify refugee leadership ecosystems and increase the participation of refugees at national and global levels in a meaningful, sustainable, and transformative way. Read about this initiative at *https://refugeesseat.org*.

Subscribe to LERRN's newsletter at *www.carleton.ca/lerrn/resources* or follow LERRN on Twitter *@Lerrning* for the latest on LERRN's activities.

The Refugee-Led Research Hub (RLRH)

RLRH is an initiative of the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at the University of Oxford, housed between Oxford and Nairobi where its offices are hosted by the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA).

The RLRH aims to support scholars and researchers who have been affected by displacement to be global leaders in knowledge production and decision making in the field of Forced Migration Studies and humanitarian research.

Under their Academic Pillar, the RLRH develops and runs graduate-level academic training programmes, including RSC Pathways, a fellowship in Refugee Studies, and a graduate access support scheme.

Under their Research Pillar, RLRH leads collaborative research projects with partners committed to promoting refugee leadership in forced migration research.

Find out more at *www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/research/refugee-led-research-hub*.

New team: Since Marion Couldrey left FMR in April after 28 years, the new team have been hard at work. Olivia Berthon joined as Deputy Editor in March to work alongside Alice Philip, who is now the Managing Editor. Maureen Schoenfeld works as Finance and Promotion Assistant and Sharon Ellis is the Assistant.

Mailing list refresh: If you received this magazine by post then you will also have a letter requesting you let us know if you would like to continue to receive the printed copy of FMR. We want to ensure that everyone who needs a hard copy has access to one, particularly people living in contexts where digital access is limited. However, we know that for some readers, switching to the digital version or receiving the shorter Editors' briefing by post will be the right choice. This is good for the environment, reducing paper and transport impacts, and allows us to invest FMR's budget in other important areas.

International Advisory Board: We have a number of positions becoming available this autumn. The group gives input into FMR's direction and members sometimes act as reviewers on articles in their areas of expertise. We are particularly looking for people who are based in regions most affected by displacement. If you would like to find out more, please email the team at fmr@qeh.ox.ac.uk.

New Director of the Refugee Studies Centre: Professor Alexander Betts will become Director of the Refugee Studies Centre, where FMR is based, from September 2022. We are very grateful to Professor Matthew Gibney, the outgoing Director, for his support of FMR. "It has been wonderful to watch FMR flourish over the last five years, expanding its audience and contributors, while maintaining its extremely high quality", said Professor Gibney. "I know that Professor Betts will work closely with the FMR editors to ensure that the journal remains preeminent in the field".

LinkedIn launch: We have recently joined LinkedIn and would love to connect with you there! Search Forced Migration Review or visit *www.linkedin.com/company/forced-migration-review*.

Keep up to date with all FMR's news

To receive our new calls for articles and full digital versions of the magazine and Editors' briefing, sign up to our mailing list by visiting *www.fmreview.org/request/alerts*

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Writing for FMR

Interested in seeing your article published in FMR? We welcome articles on any aspect of contemporary forced migration – that is, relating to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum seekers and stateless people. You can find our current calls for articles on our website *www.fmreview.org/forthcoming*.

If your topic fits with the call then please send us a proposal which follows the detailed guidance we provide *www.fmreview.org/writing-fmr*. We are happy to receive both proposals and full articles in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

You can also watch our webinar on how to write for FMR *bit.ly/Writing-for-FMR-webinar*.

Supporting FMR

All the money needed for Forced Migration Review is raised from generous donors across the world. We value all the financial support we receive, whatever the size of donation.

As an individual you can give to FMR via our donor page *www.fmreview.org/online-giving*.

If your organisation or institution would like to give towards our core costs, please do get in touch with the FMR team. Your support will be acknowledged in the issues of FMR published in the year of your gift.

We would also love to hear from you if you would like to contribute to support a specific issue of FMR, or a particular feature theme.

Partnering with FMR

Suggest a feature theme: Is there a topic you think we should cover in FMR? We welcome all suggestions. Please do get in touch with ideas for future issues.

Include FMR in a funding bid: Want to enhance an application for funds or the impact of a project by incorporating an issue of FMR into your plans? We have partnered with organisations and academic projects in this way. Please contact the FMR team to discuss potential collaborations.

Volunteer your time: Joining the International Advisory Board, promoting FMR content on social media, helping with fundraising… If you have some time to give, please do let us know how you might be able to help.

"I can capture the daily reality of my community"

"Rooftops" was one of the winning entries for Oxfam International's Rohingya Arts Competition in 2021, based on the theme "Rohingya Voices: Crisis, Resilience & Hope". The annual competition aims to amplify the voices and perspectives of Rohingya people in Myanmar, Bangladesh and around the world. More information is available at www.oxfam.org/en/rohingyaart.

(Credit: Azimul Hasson – @azimulhass)

In this photograph, poet and photographer Azimul Hasson captures a scene from a devastating fire in the Cox's Bazar refugee camps. On March 22 2021, flames ripped through the camp, destroying 11,000 shelters and leaving 45,000 people displaced. Azimul captures a shot of refugee men standing atop a bamboo and tarpaulin shelter watching the blaze. This photograph entitled "Rooftops" was originally published alongside a second photo entitled "Aftermath of the Fire" where Azimul shows the scene of devastation.

Art is essential to Azimul. "Writing poetry is my passion. It allows me to enter a world where I find no injustice, discrimination, or division of religion," he says. "Photography is my dream. I work as a photographer for my Rohingya people. It is important because there are many things journalists miss—but I live in the camps and am myself a refugee, so I can capture the daily reality of my community. Through my photos, the world can be updated about the situation in the refugee camps."

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