IASFM18: DISRUPTING THEORY, UNSETTLING PRACTICE: TOWARDS TRANSFORMATIVE FORCED MIGRATION SCHOLARSHIP AND POLICY

COVID19 Papers
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THEME: COVID19 AND FORCED MIGRATION

PANEL: PATCHING DISRUPTIONS? PERSPECTIVES ON COVID-19 AND FORCED MIGRATION IN SOUTH ASIA

The COVID-19 pandemic severely threatens the life and livelihoods of migrants in rural and urban areas in South Asia. Risk diversification strategies and employment opportunities have been undermined despite incredible levels of adaptations, coping and resilience across different strata as the disaster evolves. The pandemic has centre-staged and exacerbated underlying structural inequalities already in place pre-COVID. This exposition has also opened up pathways for a plausible rethink on mending the pandemic imposed disruptions in the arena of migration policy and scholarship.

NAUSHEEN H ANWAR, KARACHI URBAN LAB AND IBA

CITIES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: REFLECTING ON THE NATURE OF 'CRISIS' IN THE SOUTH ASIAN CITY

COVID-19 has brought containment, lockdowns, livelihood dislocations and death to vulnerable populations in South Asian cities. Reflecting on the pandemic and its impacts on Pakistan's largest metropolis Karachi, I consider how forced displacement under the COVID-19 pandemic also relates to ongoing 'crises' wrought on by overlapping challenges of urban flooding, heatwaves, infrastructural breakdowns, and a violent urban planning regime. Covid is both there and not there; it forges ahead and recedes in different temporal moments and spatial contexts. Prior logics of urbanization and urban governance are reiterated under the pandemic and become intensified. In these intense specificities and shifting temporal moments, ordinary people struggle to make sense of compounding difficulties and crises of varying intensities. The risk that people face is not only of the pandemic, but also other kinds of risks wrought on by atmospheric shifts and infrastructural breakdowns. How are ordinary people 'patching' such multiple disruptions? What are the possible pathways of 'risk mitigation' in everyday practices and state responses?

DANESH JAYATILAKA, CENTRE FOR MIGRATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDIES IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN SRI LANKA

The COVID-19 global health pandemic from 2020 created a range of disruptions across nearly every aspect of life and society. The forces and impacts the disaster is having on academic research and field projects, in the backdrop of new inequalities and vulnerabilities, are yet to be understood in substantive, temporal, and ethical and moral terms. Various crucial studies that were planned and funded had to be amended, paused, delayed or cancelled, due to challenges in nearly every level of implementation, the most arduous likely being accessing field sites and engaging respondents. This paper provides some adapting and adopting practices from a Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) supported study on infrastructure and services in Sri Lanka, where the pandemic has
claimed around 300 lives and about 60,000 infections, as of February 2021. Researchers from the Centre for Migration Research and Development (CMRD) together with collaborators from the University of Sussex and Institute of Development Studies are testing and making use of applications like Zoom, Whatsapp, Google Earth and other software to conduct community profiles, focus group discussions and surveys, while maintaining social and physical distancing standards. By innovatively fusing IT with conventional data collection methods, and relying on local field contacts, respondent smart phones, and some virtual training, it has been possible to carry on the study's fieldwork.

AMRITA LAMBA, SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES (SOAS), UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

VIBISILISING THE INVISIBLE: TOWARD A POLICY GOVERNING INTERNAL MIGRANTS IN INDIA POST COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the vulnerabilities that internal migrants have long been facing in India. The overnight nationwide lockdown in March 2020 forced over 10 million migrant labourers to return to their home states. These migrants found themselves unable to access government services such as food rations and health care. The government’s inability to anticipate their needs has made visible a large workforce that experiences precarity of work without employment guarantees, social security, or government assistance. The internal migrants sustain India’s vast and largely informal economy while remaining mostly invisible themselves. Emergency responses to the pandemic initially focused on short-term challenges and urban problematics, and concentrated on national contexts, with bilateral and international organisations and approaches sidelined. The now likely longue durée of the effects of the pandemic requires the development of innovative longer-term approaches and more explicit addressing of a fundamental policy vacuum for internal migrants.

PANEL: COVID-19 AND (IM)MOBILITY: MIGRANT RESISTANCE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Chair: Dilshad Muhammad, Arnold Bergstraesser Institute (ABI); Discussant: Franzisca Zanker, Arnold Bergstraesser Institute (ABI)

When international travel came to a halt after the virus first hit Europe in March, some observers had hoped the enforced immobility for privileged Westernized travellers, who have never had to experience something like this, might bring a renewed call for mobility justice. Mobility justice, as spelled out by Mimmi Sheller makes a case for the politics and power relations of mobility and immobility as something connected, relational and “never free but are in various ways ... controlled... and unequal – striated by gender, race, ethnicity, class, case, colour, nationality, age, sexuality, disability” (2018, 10).*

We use the concept of mobility justice as a normative ideal and a starting point for a Transregional panel that considers forced migration from a mobility perspective – who can move (freely) and who can’t. We consider mobility to be marred by power relations, and connected on multiple scales – not least the micro-level embodied experience of migrant and refugee communities. The panel considers this by looking at forms of resistance amongst migrant and refugee communities dealing with the pandemic in Mexico, Nepal, and Zimbabwe. We bring together scholars from these countries and aim to discuss how pandemic has affected (im)mobility around the globe. First and foremost, we focus on how migrants and refugee communities have resisted pandemic-related expectations on mobility. The panel explicitly discusses migrants as part of a wider debate on forced migration, acknowledging the difficulties in separating artificial, political categories.
ANITA GHIMIRE, NEPAL INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH (NISER)

HOW MIGRATION PRACTICALITIES ARE CHANGING FOR NEPALI MIGRANTS POST COVID-19 AND WHAT DOES THIS IMPLY FOR NEPAL’S MIGRATION POLICY?

The presentation will discuss how the current pandemic has altered trajectories and aspirations of current and aspiring migrants. It will then reflect on the pre-COVID migration policies of Nepal and analyses what policy/programme shifts might be needed to address the new situation. The research is an on-going part of a larger GCRF funded project “Migration, Inequality and Development (MIDEQ). It has been using qualitative approach and interviewing key informants from the government, academia, I/NGOs and key stakeholders involved in the Nepal’s migration ecosystem as well as Nepali migrants (current and aspiring) and their spouses. While migration can be a personal decision, it has strong family implications particularly during humanitarian crisis such as the pandemic.

LUISA G MORALES-VEGA, AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF MEXICO STATE

STATE CONTROL OF MIGRATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The global emergency caused by COVID-19 has given Mexican authorities, both immigration and military, one more reason to tighten border controls and expand the trend towards the externalization of borders. One example is what happened with the repression of the “migrant caravan” from Honduras in January 2021, which was hampered and dispersed by the Guatemalan police, but which the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations celebrated as a great result of the coordination between the countries in order to “comply with migration and health protocols established in the management of massive irregular flows of people.”

Additionally, Mexico recognized the action of the Guatemalan government as a “firm and responsible way in the comprehensive care of contingents of migrants who violated their sovereignty.” This accounts for the political and restrictive motivation tending to immobility despite what is established by national and international law, it also reflects the validity of the agreements established with the government of the United States. In this sense, it is evident that the formation of migrant caravans, considered as a form of collective resistance to state control, faces a strong reaction from the governments dissipating the possibility of expanding mobility justice in the region.

JOYCE TAKAINDISA, THE AFRICAN CENTRE FOR MIGRATION AND SOCIETY (ACMS)

DECONSTRUCTING FORCED MIGRATION STUDIES: THE CASE OF TWO DECADES OF ZIMBABWEANS ECONOMIC MIGRATIONS.

Zimbabwe has witnessed a mass exodus of both skilled and unskilled migrants fleeing economic and political strife. This paper argues for the necessity of reconceptualising the definition of forced migration considering empirical evidence gathered. The data used is drawn from a Doctoral thesis that focused on migrant domestic workers in Botswana as well as data from interviews with Zimbabwean asylum seekers in South Africa and the United Kingdom. Using this data, I aim to illustrate the conceptual blurriness between forced and voluntary migration. I argue that beyond the policy and legal definitions by states, these definitions are seemingly detached from the everyday realities of Zimbabwean migrants. Moreover, the fluidity of migrant statuses from migrating voluntarily to becoming asylum seekers further casts the definition of forced migration far away and detached from reality. Zimbabwe is a leading source of ‘forced humanitarian migrants’ in the SADC region since 2000. However, the rigidity of classification and perceived dichotomy between forced and voluntary migrants has arguably fuelled and
produced high numbers of irregular migrant who take on tremendous risks as they move to seek better lives. Furthermore, lack of a regional strategy to effectively deal with the Zimbabwean crisis has produced large streams of irregular migrations which lack social protection as receiving states do not recognise them as forced migrants but as voluntary migrants who have the agency to choose for themselves. Consequently, lack of official acknowledgement of Zimbabwean migrants as forced migrants poses methodological and ethical challenges.


### PANEL: WHAT MAKES DISPLACED POPULATIONS ADHERE TO PROTOCOLS FOR AVOIDING COVID-19 INFECTION?

This panel describes empirical research on the mechanisms of adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols, in what contexts protocols are followed well or poorly, and how information about the COVID-19 pandemic is understood by refugees and other displaced populations. These were projects funding by the Elrha R2HC funding mechanism, which aims to improve health outcomes in humanitarian settings.

**STEHANIE NAWYN (PRESENTING AUTHOR), MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY; STEPHEN GASTEYER, EZGI KARAOĞLU, ADNAN HAMMAD, MAHMOUD DURID, ALI GHASSANI, RANIA MANSOUR, AND AYAT NASHWAN.**

### COVID-19 POLICIES VS. PRACTICES OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE NGOs: REDUCING INFECTION RISK AMONG REFUGEES IN THE MENA REGION

Abstract: Introduction: NGOs provide essential humanitarian services to refugees. To provide services safely during the COVID-19 pandemic, they have instituted safety protocols to mitigate the risk of spreading infection. However, those protocols are not always followed. To improve the safety of refugee services, it is imperative to understand when protocols are not followed, what the possible barriers to adherence are, and how those barriers can be overcome. This study aimed to address these questions and provide guidance and recommendations for humanitarian stakeholders. It focused on social distancing, mask wearing, and hand hygiene, measuring how well those protocols were followed during different types of services and with different refugee populations. Barriers such as lack of physical space, lack of knowledge about COVID-19, limitations of the services, and attitudes about COVID-19 were measured. Key Findings: In situations that were inherently higher risk, people were more adherent to safety protocols and there was subsequently less infection risk. Conversely, there were more potential infection vectors when people felt safer. It was expected that availability of hand hygiene resources like soap and sanitizer would be a challenge. In fact, refugees and NGO staff did not always use such resources when they were available. Cultures of protocol adherence seem to operate in service spaces, with norms emerging around specific protocols such that one protocol might be followed well while another protocol might have lax adherence.

**GLORIA SERUWAGI, MAKERERE UNIVERSITY; STEPHEN LAWOKO, JOSHUA KAYIWA, BETTY OKOT, DUNSTAN DDAMULIRA, ANDREW MASABA, ERIC AWICH OCHEN1, BRIAN LUSWATA, DENIS MUVANGU.**

### WHAT REALLY DETERMINES SOP ADHERENCE IN COVID-HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS? EXPERIENCES FROM A UGANDAN MULTI-SITE STUDY IN 13 REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS.
Abstract: Introduction: Uganda put in place strict guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the wake of its first confirmed COVID-19 case. Announced by the President, these came to be largely known as “Presidential Directives” and started with a nationwide lockdown heavily enforced by local leaders, police and military personnel. This was alongside the requirement to comply with several other preventive measures including facemasking, sanitizing, handwashing with soap, social distancing and restricted movement. Punishment for non-adherence was punitive. The REFLECT Study assessed adherence to, feasibility and enforcement of these guidelines in Uganda’s diverse humanitarian contexts.

Methods: Cross-sectional and mixed method, using quantitative and qualitative approaches. Total participants were 2,092 spread across 13 refugee settlements in Uganda’s different regions. Data were collected between September – November 2020. Quantitative data was analyzed using T-test, ANOVA and multivariable linear regression while qualitative data was analysed thematically guided by study objectives.

Results: Awareness on Covid-19 was high in refugee communities, although up to 40% had critical information gaps. There was low risk perception and non-adherence to nearly all SOPs for majority of the refugees. Adherence variations were observed across different social demographic variables including location (urban vs. rural), age, gender and religious affiliation. Explanatory factors include mixed messages from multiple information centres, diaspora links, politics, socioeconomic, cultural and structural barriers.

Conclusions: A predominantly top-down approach in pandemic management with limited cognizance of contextual issues brings to light questions around its feasibility, outcome and impact in already-constrained settings like refugee settlements. Meaningful community involvement is key.

MAREIKE SCHOMERUS AND LARA TEMBEY, BUSARA CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS

INFORMATION, A PANDEMIC AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT: WHAT ARE THE MECHANISMS THROUGH WHICH PEOPLE ACT ON INFORMATION THEY HEAR ABOUT COVID-19?

The World Health Organization talks of an ‘infodemic’ as a side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic: The phenomenon of a deluge of information and misinformation that has created mistrust, rumours and is believed to make it much more difficult to convince the public to adhere to public health measures. While information clearly has an effect on what people believe, our empirical knowledge on how exactly information works, becomes powerful, and influences behaviour is surprisingly limited. It is almost non-existent when it comes to how such mechanisms work in situations of forced displacement.

Using experimental empirical evidence collected in 2021 in displacement settings in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kenya, this study tests what information-based mechanisms lead to non-compliance with public health measures; how these interact with existing beliefs and anxieties to allow rumours on COVID-19 to gain credence; and what strategies on effective messaging might be able counter a detrimental effect. The study further seeks to identify how such rumours create negative social and psychological effects that could point to developing conflictual dynamics. Starting from a mapping of how refugees and internally displaced persons access, use, and spread information on COVID-19 and what information is transmitted via these channels, the insights gained from behavioural experiments help us understand how underlying anxieties, beliefs and trust determine whether people judge information as trustworthy and how and why they act on it.
PANEL: COLLABORATION IN THE TIME OF COVİD: A DIALOGUE ON HOW PANDEMICS--AND OTHER SUDDEN CRISES--IMPACT PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN CONTEXTS OF FORCED MIGRATION

ADAM SALTSMAN, WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY; ANITA FÁBOS, CLARK UNIVERSITY; CRAIG MORTLEY, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY; HILDA RAMIREZ, WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY

In recent years, forced migration scholars have increasingly turned to participatory research approaches, allowing for a wider range of community-engaged practices with people from forced migrant backgrounds, including the co-creation of research initiatives and collective advocacy (Gilhooly and Lee, 2016; Hugman et al., 2011; Okigbo et al., 2009). But what happens to research and action collaborations between scholars and practitioners from forced migrant backgrounds when nearly everything about their agenda and how the group came together is upended by a pandemic? This roundtable discussion applies this question to a case study of scholar-practitioner partnership in the mid-size city of Worcester in the US state of Massachusetts.

Prior to COVID, a group of eight community-based organizations involved in service provision with newcomer and migrant populations, the City of Worcester’s Office of Diversity and Human Rights, and two community-engaged scholars had met for about six months to plan a collective exchange that we came to call Shared Belonging Worcester. We initially came together in September 2019 to discuss questions of representation for newcomer communities and the organizations that represent as well as serve and advocate for them. Underlying our work together has been a commitment to ideals of equity, participatory visioning, shared decision-making, and a collective goal of producing an action-oriented conference to amplify community concerns. However, when the pandemic struck March, 2020, and Worcester shut down, our efforts faltered. Where consensus had existed before around immediate outcomes, we now lacked it; where our collaboration had been marked by a spirit of shared eagerness, some of us began to question the utility of our plans. We experienced a lack of clarity in how to connect our new reality to the group’s overall goals, and we were unable to pivot to meet the demands of the moment, which were more focused on crisis management than the more abstract, but still relevant, topic of belonging, welcome, and representation. This experience raises the question of why our participatory approach could not rise to the occasion. Addressing this question, our roundtable discussion will reflect on what, then, it would take for arenas of participation--what Torre and colleagues (2008) call "participatory contact zones"--to weather the upheaval of a pandemic and more effectively transform their collective power into part of broader pandemic response strategies.

Embedded in this conversation are perennial themes of power, trust, and voice in collaborations between academics and practitioners from newcomer and forced migrant backgrounds. That is, as the pandemic laid bare differentials in power and privilege in terms of both access to resources and the disproportionate exposure to risk and death, it is important to give thought to how a shifting landscape for collaboration can surface disparities and shifted the locus of trust—or at least consensus—away from where it needs to be for effective partnership. This is a reminder that democratic practices for collaboration in participatory research or action approaches do not “flatten” power relations, and they do not exist beyond or outside of structural forms of violence (Janes 2016).

In this exploration, concepts of citizenship offer an innovative way to consider some of the overlapping sets of power relations in which this engaged work has been situated. Specifically, we spotlight universities as inequitable sites of differential academic citizenship, and municipalities that perpetuate unequal participation and second-class belonging for newcomer communities as we unpack some of the implicit dynamics in our own participatory process. Both models of citizenship and belonging hinder engaged practice of the sort our initiative seeks to develop. We would like to know more about why this is so, and we would like to do better.
PANEL: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON REFUGEE PROTECTION IN AFRICA

NADINE SEGADLO, INSTITUTE FOR MIGRATION RESEARCH AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES (IMIS), OSNABRUECK UNIVERSITY; QAABATA BORU, KANERE; AMANDA COFFIE, LEGON CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA; SHARON EKAMBARAM, REFUGEE & MIGRANT RIGHTS PROGRAMME, LAWYERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS SOUTH AFRICA; ULRIKE KRAUSE, INSTITUTE FOR MIGRATION RESEARCH AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES, OSNABRUECK UNIVERSITY; FRANZISCA ZANKER, ARNOLD BERGSTRAESSER INSTITUTE; RONALD KALYANGO SEBBA, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION, MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

The Covid-19 pandemic has significant effects on all sectors of society but its impacts are felt unevenly across different groups. Refugees and displaced people, who were often already in difficult situations prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, possibly face ongoing and additional challenges triggered by the virus itself, by measures taken to curb its spread as well as their wide consequences. For example, restrictions on movement and border closures have had far-reaching impacts on refugees and displaced populations. In African countries, refugees and displaced people seek refuge in different environments. However, their living conditions, whether in camps or urban informal settlements, are often characterised by the infeasibility of practicing social distancing, sanitation and hygiene protocols. Moreover, lockdown measures and the inability to work have widespread socio-economic effects. These various pandemic-related impacts are expected to affect the delivery of protection and assistance to displaced people; the extent of it is yet to come to light though.

This roundtable places a focus on these effects of the pandemic on refugee protection and refugees’ lives in African countries. As a point of departure, it provides insights into results of an online survey on these effects, carried out in January and February 2021 in six African states, namely Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Based on that, researchers and (refugee-) activists working in the field of (forced) migration and refugee studies in Ghana, Uganda, Kenya and South Africa reflect how the pandemic has affected refugee protection in the respective countries, the challenges refugees face due to the pandemic as well as governments’, aid agencies’ and refugees’ responses. By bringing in perspectives from different countries and various backgrounds, the roundtable provides an opportunity to develop insights into the effects refugees and displaced populations are confronted with due to the pandemic. It thus enables critical reflection on pandemic responses and an exchange of ideas for future research areas.

SINGLE PAPERS

SAWSAN ABDULRAHIM, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE "FUZZY LINE" BETWEEN ECONOMIC AND FORCED MIGRATION: WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS IN LEBANON FACING COVID-19 AND ECONOMIC CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Lebanon at a time when citizens and non-citizens alike were already struggling to cope with an unprecedented economic crisis and the sudden devaluation of their income and loss of savings. Women
migrant workers (WMWs) in Lebanon have always experienced intersecting vulnerabilities given the gendered inequitable global political economy and racial capitalism that gives life to Kafala, the system of recruiting and employing migrant workers in the Arab region. COVID-19 control measures in the country met with an economic collapse that further magnified the vulnerabilities of WMWs and shifted their positionality from economic migrants deserving of labor protections to subjects in need of humanitarian aid. In response, the discourse on solidarity pertaining to WMWs began to focus on the provision of shelter, food, and repatriation, elements that are usually evoked in the context of forced migration. We describe pathways through which the pandemic and economic collapse have conspired to further constrain WMWs’ autonomy and heighten their health and economic vulnerability in ways that parallel the experiences of refugees. Through examining the shift in positionality of WMWs in Lebanon over the past year and a half, we present a case for considering the “fuzzy line” between economic and forced migration in sociological writings.

NATHALIE BOTH, JESSICA HAGEN-ZANKER, ODI (UK)

SOCIAL PROTECTION PROVISIONS TO REFUGEES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC - LESSONS LEARNED FROM GOVERNMENT AND HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant health, social and economic impacts throughout the world, affecting already disadvantaged groups more heavily than others. Refugees represent a particularly vulnerable group in this crisis due to their often-limited access to healthcare, their often restricted rights to work, and their exclusion from most government social protection programmes - programmes which have come to the fore as a key mechanism to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Yet there is growing international interest around finding sustainable solutions for displacement situations - including for the inclusion of refugees in national social protection programmes – and for greater coherence between humanitarian interventions and national policies and strategies. Has COVID-19 played a role in shifting social protection approaches to refugees?

In this paper, we review the evidence on a) the inclusion of refugees in government-led social protection responses to COVID-19 with a focus on Republic of Congo and Colombia, and b) on the alignment or integration of international humanitarian actor’s cash assistance to refugees with government social protection responses – focusing on Jordan and Pakistan. We ask: how effective have these government and humanitarian efforts been for refugees in terms of coverage, timeliness and benefit adequacy? Have these interventions contributed to strengthening national social protection systems? And how sustainable are these different approaches – both for refugee-hosting governments, and for humanitarian actors involved in displacement responses? What lessons can be learned from these case studies for more effective social protection and humanitarian support to refugees in crisis contexts?

AGNES BURUME, SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY’ GLOBAL EDUCATION MOVEMENT (SNHU’GEM); EMMA NORLAND, SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY (SNHU)

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS OF COVID19 ON REFUGEE ONLINE LEARNING

The Global Education Movement (GEM) at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) serves approximately a thousand refugees settled across five nations (Rwanda, South Africa, Malawi, Kenya, and Lebanon) through a
combination of a competency-based online education and in-person supports administered by partnering organizations. In order to understand how the global spread and pervasive impacts of the COVID19 pandemic impacted GEM students, we conducted an online survey of the GEM refugee student population. The high response rate of our survey (38.7%) allowed us to draw generalizable conclusions (4.7% margin of error with a 95% confidence interval) about the broad impacts of the COVID19 pandemic on these students. This presentation will explore three broad themes that emerged from this research. First, our results indicate that the impact of COVID19 on refugee students’ academics, housing, and other personal factors varied on a nation-by-nation status. Second, despite COVID19-related issues, females, who comprise roughly half of the GEM program, still outperformed males on various academic measures of success. Third, despite overall negative impacts of the pandemic on academics, which are shown through within-student comparisons of students who completed associate’s level programs pre-pandemic and then continued studies in bachelor’s program during the pandemic, some refugee students were able to thrive academically by taking advantage of some of the consequences (e.g. increased time) of lockdown-associated lifestyle changes. The utility of these findings for tailoring refugee supports in anticipation of unforeseen adjustments or disruptions to academic life are considered.

HUI YIN CHUAH, ASIA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS; MELATI NUNGSARI, ASIA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MIT; SAM FLANDERS, ASIA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MIT

NO ESCAPE: REFUGEE EXPERIENCES IN THE COVID-19 LOCK-DOWN IN MALAYSIA

While the literature surrounding issues related to the pandemic is rapidly expanding every day, study on the impacts of the pandemic in emerging economies particularly on the vulnerable populations such as refugees is sparse. Although some attention has been given to understanding and measuring the health risks of displaced persons in camps and urban slums, there have not been many attempts to address the experiences of refugees within a country, and to understand the economic and social impacts of the pandemic on their lives – a gap that this paper seeks to address by presenting a qualitative study of experiences of forced migrants in Peninsular Malaysia. The paper also seeks to answer: how has refugee trust towards authority figures (e.g. the government and public health officials) changed throughout the pandemic, and how has this impacted their compliance and attitudes towards public health measures?

The paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, we conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 25 community leaders from eight refugee ethnic groups based on five different dimensions: economic, social, security, health, and communication of information during the pandemic. Based on grounded theory, we then build a theoretical framework to explain the experience of a refugee in Malaysia during the pandemic. We find that the experiences of the refugees mediate their trust in authority figures during the time of the pandemic. Using this model, we then conduct a comparative qualitative study between two refugee groups – the Rohingya and Syrian - to specifically probe the impact of identity on the experience of an average refugee. We find that identity was a truly defining factor in determining a refugee's experience and that an experience of a refugee community leader is vastly different than an “average” refugee.

CRISTINA CHURRUCA MUGURUZA, UNIVERSIDAD DE DEUSTO; DANIELA LO COCO, IRIDIA HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION; ELOISA GONZALEZ-HIDALGO, TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, MEXICO; WOOLDY EDSON LOUIDOR, PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD JAVERIANA IN COLOMBIA; MARIA FERNANDEZ,
THE IMPACT OF THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC ON REFUGEES AND OTHER DISPLACED PERSONS. EXPERIENCES FROM THE BORDER

The global COVID-19 crisis has entrenched restrictions on international movement and the curtailment of rights of people on the move. The health crisis has facilitated the intensification of policies to contain the movement of refugees and migrants across borders. At the global level, the health emergency has legitimized the militarization of borders; as well as the legitimation of detention and deportations. Additionally, the intensification of contention measures within a context of the pandemic are exacerbating already existing high levels of xenophobia, racism and stigmatization of racialized people and migrants themselves giving rise to attacks against refugees and migrants.

Drawing on local experiences from border areas participants of this roundtable will discuss the intensification of migration control policies, the militarization of borders, detention, deportation and other containment measures, the role of racism and their impact on refugees and migrant protection in European and Latin American borders.

Spaces and places of migrants’ contention have become normalised over the last two decades. Concretely, in the so-called southern borders of Europe the case of the Greek islands and the case of the Canary Islands together with the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla are paradigmatic. Besides, the cases of Morocco and Mexico as contention regions, or Venezuelan and Colombian cases constitute significant examples of how contention has been implemented in different regions as a global trend. With the COVID-19 pandemic spaces of contention and deprotection have intensified while hindering migrants rights. The difficulty in managing mobility during the health emergency has favoured the improvisation of measures that, on occasions, have seriously affected their rights. People are contained not only through a complicated bureaucratic framework but also through different deprivation or semi-deprivation of liberty mechanisms such as camps, camps, internment centres, hotspots, detention centres, emergency centres of different kinds or “waiting” areas in airports. In the case of border management, it is difficult to identify the line between pandemic management and discriminatory measures towards migrants.

Increasing border closures and measures to restrict the movement of people often results in many refugees and migrants stranded in border areas. For those on the move or stranded in densely populated areas and/ or in shelters, social distancing and/or limiting outdoor activities are virtually impossible to implement, thereby increasing the likelihood of contracting or spreading the virus. Movement restrictions can increase reliance on smugglers and illicit groups. With increasing closures of porous borders migrants are compelled to resort to more risky migration and informal border crossing via. Experience from previous epidemics suggest that restrictions on movement and other contingency measures can create opportunities for sexual exploitation and abuse.

In this context the aim of this roundtable is to discuss the following questions:

- In which way has the COVID-19 crisis entrenched restrictions on international movement and the curtailment of rights of people on the move?
- To which extent has the health crisis facilitated the intensification of policies to contain the movement of refugees and migrants across borders?
- Which are the similarities and differences in the migration management practices in response to the pandemic in European and Latin American Southern borders?
• What is the role of racism and xenophobia in legitimizing control of racialized people and migrants in a context of the pandemic-19?
• Which has been the impact on these interventions on refugees and migrants protection?
• What is the relation between the health crisis and the migration crisis, and between the governance of both crises?

HEAVEN CRAWLEY, COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

THE POLITICS OF REFUGEE PROTECTION IN A POST COVID-19 WORLD

The COVID-19 pandemic is not a ‘great equaliser’ as some have claimed but rather an amplifier of existing inequalities including those associated with migration. Perhaps not surprisingly it is refugees, often the most marginalised of all migrants, who have had the most to lose. Refugees and displaced populations living in crowded and unhygienic conditions have often been unable to protect themselves from the virus, face increasing economic precarity and often find themselves excluded from measures to alleviate poverty and hunger. The threat to refugees comes not only from material (in)security but from increasing exclusion and exceptionalism associated with the politics of protection. Evidence from the first nine months of the pandemic suggests that some governments, in Europe and US but also the Global South, are using COVID-19 as an excuse to double-down on border closures and/or dip into their migration policy toolboxes to demonstrate the robustness of their response to it. Refugees are increasingly prevented from accessing the international protection to which they are potentially entitled or used (alongside migrants more generally) as scapegoats by populist leaders exploiting the pandemic for political mileage. Some States have used the pandemic to push through controversial policies that further limit access to protection and/or institutionalize the marginalization of refugees. In this context it seems likely that COVID-19 will accelerate the course of history in relation to refugee protection, rather than changing its direction.

LUCIANA LAURA DIAS, UEPB - UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DA PARAÍBA

DISPLACED AND ISOLATED: EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON IDPS GENERATED BY DAM RUPTURE IN BRAZIL

The presentation is a case study about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on internally displaced persons generated by what is considered the greatest socio-environmental disaster in Brazilian history and the largest in the world involving tailings dams. The rupture of the Fundão dam, located in the sub-district of Bento Rodrigues, 35 km distant from the center of the Brazilian municipality of Mariana / Minas Gerais, occurred in the afternoon of November 5th, 2015. Most of the survivor victims of the disaster lost their homes, which they had to abandon and where they still wish to return. In fact, those affected have been in a diaspora situation for five years.

With the threat posed by the covid-19 pandemic, those internally displaced people are being isolated in places they do not recognize as home. Social isolation, advocated by the World Health Organization to combat the pandemic, has occurred for those affected since 2015. Now, they are isolated due to the disease, but before they were already isolated from people.
The internally displaced persons of this disaster experience prejudice and mistrust in Mariana, since their children are called "mud feet" in school and they are discriminated as if they were the cause of the tragedy that hit the municipality.

The heightened vulnerability of these internally displaced persons is reflected in numbers: while the state average in Minas Gerais is 1,193 infected by the new coronavirus per 100,000 inhabitants, that of the municipalities affected by the disaster is 1,538, a 29% higher rate.

MARIE FALLY, UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL

SINGLE MOTHERHOOD DURING A PANDEMIC: EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEE WOMEN IN CANADA

In the context of forced migration, being a single mother often rhymes with precarity, instability and socio-economic inequalities. Whether mothers find themselves raising their children alone either by choice or not and temporarily or in the long-term, the obstacles they face are exacerbated by the fact that host countries rarely offer the right support. Even though my research initially set out to explore how those women navigate the familial transformations and challenges posed by forced migration as they seek to anchor their lives in Canada, the COVID-19 crisis forced me to take a brand-new perspective on my participants' trajectories. Often in the midst of rebuilding their lives, as the pandemic progresses, the challenges have dramatically multiplied as many single mothers find themselves entrenched in precarity. Stuck with the lack of access to support, locked down with often severe trauma, raising kids even more solitarily than before, my research has provided me with new illustrations of the challenges they face. With this paper, I will provide a snapshot of the life of a refugee single mother in Montreal so as to foreground the immense emotional and physical challenges involved in raising children in the context of exile during a global pandemic. It will reveal how the crisis represents a whole new set of obstacles that refugees have been forced to deal with. By using transnational feminism standpoint methodologies and epistemologies, I will revisit the portrait of those women, and analyse how the "new normal" imposed by the pandemic is affecting their lives.

BARBARA FRANZ, RIDER UNIVERSITY

COVID-19 & THE FUTURE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES: A BOTTOM-UP ANALYSIS

The Covid-19 pandemic, in combination with the Trump administration’s anti-immigration policies, has led to policy shifts and temporary bans that have essentially ended refugee resettlement in the United States. The Trump administration also successfully dismantled long-standing asylum policies.

Regional organizations, however, have continued to sponsor refugees and provided community-based educational, employment, and material support work. In the Tri-State area, local pockets of resistance have initiated grass-roots programs such as the Covid-19 Relief Fund and the Mask Making Initiative. The Biden administration has announced that it will increase the current fiscal year’s cap of refugee admissions, allow for referrals from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and restore allocations based on vulnerability. This paper provides a bottom-up perspective, surveying the work of four regional community-based nonprofit groups
(Neighbors for Refugees, Hearts & Homes for Refugees, Welcome Home Jersey City, First Friends of New Jersey & New York) whose focus is refugee resettlement and inclusion work. In order to alleviate the long-lasting impacts of the Trump administration and the pandemic on humanitarian immigration into the United States, it explores both the program and policy suggestions of resettled refugees, volunteers, and advocates.

AMIRA GIADALA, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND; KATHRYN LINDQUIST, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

ADVERSE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON DISPLACED POPULATIONS: NEW EVIDENCE FROM SOUTHERN CENTRAL AMERICA

Totaling over 105 million cases world-wide, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has compelled societies and their leaders to re-evaluate their approaches to governance, national security, and their economies. Migrants are frequently overlooked in the protectionist policies that ensue in response to large-scale disasters, which typically prioritize citizens and other legalized communities. A chief example of this phenomenon are the displaced persons from northern Central America who have fled to Costa Rica and Panama. While both countries have a recognized history of integrating migrants and displaced persons, the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated many pre-existing challenges and has adversely affected the economic security and opportunities of these vulnerable communities.

This mixed-methods analysis provides new data from October 2020 to January 2021, including a business survey of Costa Rican and Panamanian businesses and a series of Key Informant Interviews (KIs) with subject matter experts and other knowledgeable figures in the region. Specifically, it examines the economic effects of COVID-19 on displaced persons from Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and others in Costa Rica and Panama. This new evidence suggests that COVID-19 has played an incomparable role in exacerbating economic and social conditions for displaced communities in Panama and Costa Rica. Displaced populations often lack regularized status and are frequently denied access to government programs and financial support as a result. These uncertainties are coupled with a climate in which business are increasingly unwilling to hire migrants, meaning that many have few prospects in these two host countries.

ALANNA HEYER, UNHCR - EDUCATION SECTION, TERTIARY EDUCATION TEAM; MANAL STULGAITIS, UNHCR EDUCATION OFFICER; DOROTHEA SEITZ, UNHCR EDUCATION INTERN; STUDENTS FONI JOYCE; HALA HAJ TALEB; SADIKI BAMPERINEZA; HINA SHIKHANI

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE PROMISE AND CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL/BLENDED HIGHER EDUCATION IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

While the COVID-19 pandemic expanded the world of accredited digital and blended higher education opportunities (which the UNHCR defines as connected education), it highlighted critical gaps in access to higher education among refugees and other forcibly displaced young people. In addition to the stark digital divide in hardware and reliable connectivity, this new way of learning and participating in school as well as restrictive cross-country policies that limit the sharing of education resources further excludes young refugees from national education systems. Examples of particularly limiting cross-country policies include international sanctions on countries hosting large numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees that limit students’ use of imported
digital educational resources e.g. remote resources from higher education institutions, Duolingo. Students leading this panel will reflect on their own experiences accessing and supporting other refugees to pursue higher education during the pandemic. Furthermore, they will discuss the shifting landscape of higher education and transformative policy actions countries can take to enable inclusive education in an ongoing and post-pandemic world.

DIANA IHRING, IMPACT INITIATIVES

PUSHED TO THE BRINK? THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION IN THE SAHEL

The study aims to increase understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on environmental migration in the Sahel through an iterative qualitative research approach. Findings draw on an extensive secondary data review, key informant interviews with migration experts, humanitarian and development practitioners in the region, and 135 individual in-person semi-structured interviews with migrants engaged in seasonal migration patterns in the region, conducted in Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Niger. To compare impacts on different types of migration patterns, three different population groups were included in the study: 1) internal rural-to-urban migrants in Niger, 2) the cross-border rural-to-urban migration of Nigerians to Niger, and cross-border rural-to-rural migration from Burkina Faso to Côte d’Ivoire. The study was conducted between September and December 2020, with primary data collection taking place in November 2020.

The study finds that already prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 seasonal environmental migrants’ livelihoods were based on a fine balance between ever increasing unpredictable harvest yields and seasonal migration patterns to complement otherwise insufficient agricultural outputs. Already before the virus outbreak, seasonal migration patterns were more akin to distress migration –migration done out of necessity to meet the most basic needs – as opposed to supplementing livelihoods at origin. COVID-19, and associated movement restrictions, has tipped this fine balance over. The disruption of migration patterns has had an immediate impact on environmental migrants’ lives, which will continue to permeate their lives in the mid-and, possibly, longer term.

MIRIAM JAEHN, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

‘REMOTE’ ETHNOGRAPHY DURING A PANDEMIC: FRICTIONS AND CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATING INTIMACIES

When the wave of the pandemic erupted in China, I was currently on fieldwork in Nepal and ended up in a lockdown. The lockdown suddenly cut me off from the Rohingya communities I worked with. Being far from ‘home’ and isolated, I became increasingly indecisive and torn between leaving or staying. I received emails from my institution asking me to imagine working with the Rohingya in new ways and think beyond ethnography as ‘being in the field’. But the issue was that doing ethnography is about ‘intimacy’ and I did not know how to establish and maintain ‘intimacy’ with refugees, in the sense of proximity and closeness, by doing ‘remote’ ethnography? Already the word ‘remote’ appears to be antagonistic to ideas on ‘intimacy’. I did not understand how I could be ‘in the field’, being proximate and close with the Rohingya, despite ‘leaving’ them. Only then did I understand that I had to translate the intimate relations I had built offline to the online world. However, these translations were full of friction and demanded drawing on past and future intimate relations offline – experienced
as well as imagined. In this presentation I will discuss my experiences with translating my intimate relations with the Rohingya living in Thailand and Nepal from the offline to the online world and the challenges that such translations entailed as they transformed, were interrupted, built anew, and often left me speechless.

LILIANA JUBILUT, UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DE SANTOS

MIGRATION AND COVID-19: HUMAN RIGHTS INTERACTIONS PERCEIVED BY THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the world in the last year with its multidimensional effects, also impacting human rights – both in general, and, perhaps more profoundly, for vulnerable populations, such as refugees and other migrants. The pandemic has negatively affected global mobility, including access and respect to (human) rights, highlighting these issues’ thematic intersections. Thus, assessing the interaction of migration, COVID-19, and human rights together is timely and relevant. The Inter-American Human Rights System has been actively involved in this sense. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, for instance, has issued a resolution on human rights in the pandemic in the Americas (1/2020), another (4/2020) on human rights of persons with COVID-19 (including migrants), and a third factoring in the effects of pandemic-related exceptional measures on forced migrants (93/20) and installed a Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, by its turn, has tackled the interactions of Covid-19 and migration in the context of detention and access to health (Vélez Loor vs. Panamá case) and, in general, by focusing on the respect for international obligations (Statement 1/20). In light of the challenges imposed by COVID-19, it is interesting and relevant to ascertain how the system perceives the interrelations among the safeguard of human rights, pandemic-related measures and the potential vulnerability of refugees and other migrants. This presentation aims to undertake this analysis, through International Human Rights Law and International Refugee Law lenses, to highlight the interactions among human rights, migration and COVID-19.

SUSAN MARTIN, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION
JONAS BERGMANN, POTSDAM INSTITUTE FOR CLIMATE IMPACT RESEARCH

COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON (IM)MOBILITY

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted global human mobility dynamics. The proposed presentation examines the historical, bidirectional links between pandemics and mobility and provides an early analysis of how they unfolded during the first 18 months of the COVID-19 emergency. Our analysis demonstrates that the pandemic, government responses, and resulting economic impacts have led to the involuntary immobility of at-risk populations, such as aspiring asylum-seekers or survival migrants. In a similar fashion, stay-at-home measures have posed dire challenges for those workers who lack options to work from home, as well as for migrants living in precarious, crowded circumstances. Moreover, global economic contraction has increased involuntary immobility by reducing both people’s resources to move and the demand for labor. Further, people’s attempts to protect themselves from the virus can result in shifting patterns of mobility, such as increases in cross-border return migration and urban-to-rural movements. Results show that international travel and other restrictions on mobility are not effective in and of themselves in combatting the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19. Drawing on international
guidance for measures to combat pandemics and relevant frameworks on mobility, we propose approaches to alleviate the burden of travel restrictions on migrants and people aspiring to move, while still addressing the need to contain the pandemic and lessen its repercussions.

LUCIA NALBANDIAN, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

THE ROLE OF FORCED MIGRATION IN THE SPREAD OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

For most travellers, transitioning from one destination to another is often inconsequential in terms of health. However, during times of crisis, the transition period for individuals moving across borders can greatly affect health, for both the individual themselves as well as the receiving population. Accordingly, the health and disease measures in a destination country matter as travel can bridge the gap between disease prevalence in two separate regions. Epidemiology, the branch of medicine dealing with the distribution, incidence and control of diseases, and migration, the flow of people (vectors for disease) across borders and into different populations, are directly linked. A person moving from one geographic location to another can act as a host for a disease and their movement across borders can facilitate vector transmission of the infectious agent into a new population. Consequently, practices like border control and quarantine long ago emerged as attempts to control the spread of communicable diseases. However, thoughtful consideration must be given to the role of the immigrant, particularly the refugee, and the receiving state, when it comes to epidemiology and population health. This paper assesses the role of forced migration and refugees’ return migration habits to determine their impact on epidemiology, population health and the spread of communicable diseases.

MAGGIE PERZYNA, RYERSON UNIVERSITY, CERC IN MIGRATION

THE SUBSTANCE OF SOLIDARITY: WHAT THE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SAYS ABOUT THE GLOBAL REFUGEE REGIME

The ‘European migrant crisis’ of 2015 brought to light the urgent need for solidarity and responsibility-sharing in dealing with large influxes of people fleeing war, conflict and persecution. This spirit was captured in two subsequent international agreements: the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)(2018) and the Global Compact for Safe and Orderly Migration (GCM)(2018). In the midst of a very different kind of crisis – the global COVID-19 pandemic – the need for solidarity and responsibility-sharing is all the more imperative as COVID-19 has become a ‘risk multiplier’ for asylum seekers, compounding existing drivers. By examining how Western nation states in the global North have responded to asylum seekers during the pandemic against the backdrop of existing international refugee law, practice, and policy, this essay seeks to evaluate the normative potential of the GCR and the GCM for the entrenchment of the principle of solidarity. Employing the theoretical framework of governmentality, this presentation argues that despite the rhetoric of responsibility-sharing, the reactions of Western nation states reflect an existing trend toward exclusionary impulses, with countries reflexively reverting to patterns of state-centric, insular protectionism. Taking these issues into consideration, the presentation will focus on Canada’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic in light of its proximity to and relationship with the United States in an effort to illustrate how biopower is being deployed to exclude in line with neoliberal rationalities, even in a country that is usually heralded as a beacon of humanitarianism. The presentation will conclude with a guarded diagnosis that
warns of the potential for an international protection crisis should civil society fail to challenge prevailing biopolitics.

JENNY PHILLIMORE, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM; SANDRA PERTEK, PIP MCKNIGHT, SELIN AKYÜZ, HOAYDA DARKAL, JEANINE HOURANI, SAIME OZCURUMEZ, SARAH TAAL

"WE ARE FORGOTTEN": FORCED MIGRATION, SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic the intersection of forced migration and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) became even more complex. This article explores, with 52 survivors and 45 practitioners from five countries, how early pandemic conditions affected forced migrant SGBV survivors’ lives. Interacting forms of structural violence exacerbated by pandemic conditions added a further layer of disadvantage to existing inequalities. Abandonment of survivors increased precarity, making everyday survival more difficult, and intensified the slow violence experienced prepandemic, while increased uncertainty heightened psychological distress. Further attention is needed to explore the impact of evolving pandemic conditions on abandoned forced migrant survivors.

JOSHUA PROWSE, IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD OF CANADA

VIRTUAL REFUGEE STATUS DETERMINATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of countries have deferred in-person refugee status determination hearings and replaced them with virtual hearings conducted by videoconference. How have the virtual proceedings been received by refugee claimants? This paper uses two methodologies to examine this question from the perspective of claimants participating in the Canadian first-level refugee status determination process.

The paper’s first methodology looks at claimant willingness and ability to proceed virtually. Not all claimants have access to the technology and private space necessary to have a virtual hearing. The Canadian system has responded to this by providing claimants with a choice about whether to proceed with a virtual hearing or whether to defer their hearing to a time when in-person hearings have resumed. What can be gleaned from analyzing statistics about the decisions that claimants have made when presented with this choice? This paper looks at claimants’ revealed preferences through an intersectional lens that considers country of origin, claim type, age, family size, and acceptance rate.

The paper’s second methodology examines claimant satisfaction with, and impressions of, their virtual hearing. A post-hearing survey was provided to refugee claimants soliciting feedback about their virtual hearing. This paper assesses trends in the responses. What claimants would recommend a virtual hearing to others? Which would not? How does this differ depending on factors such as the technology used to access the hearing?

The paper concludes by identifying categories of claimants that have been keen to proceed virtually and categories that have been more reticent, along with the reasons articulated for such preferences.
SUSAN BETH ROTTMANN + MAISSAM NIMER (CO-AUTHOR), OZYEGIN UNIVERSITY + PARIS NANTERRE UNIVERSITY

MARGINALIZATION AND HYPER-PRECARITY AT THE INTERSECTION OF MIGRATION AND COVID-19 GOVERNANCE: REFUGEES AS 'BUFFERS' FOR THE TURKISH LABOUR MARKET IN TIMES OF CRISIS

This paper analyzes the effects of the governance of migration and the Covid-19 pandemic on precarious Syrian refugees. Using interviews with migrants before and after the pandemic and a review of state policies, this study uncovers the mechanisms of the pandemic response at state, institutional and individual levels. We argue that governance of migration and of Covid-19 compound inequalities as the pandemic increased the disposability of migrant bodies. While migrants initially lost their employment indeterminately without notice, the eventual lifting of the first lockdowns revealed unequal expectations towards refugee and non-migrant labour. Refugees and their businesses were under the limited care of international funds. The result was a strong reliance on individual coping mechanisms to deal with increased hyper-precarity. State power over life became even more indispensable to capitalism in the pandemic, transforming Syrians into 'market buffers' whose main function was to prevent or delay bankruptcies.

SODIP ROY, CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST

COVID-19 IN THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS IN BANGLADESH: A LITMUS TEST OF EMERGING AGENCY AMONG THE REFUGEE

No diseases, as well as COVID-19, can have a positive impact on a community and public health. But it can be said in the case of Rohingya refugee and overall Bangladeshi people that they were saved from devastating causalities of this pandemic unlike in many other parts of the globe. Instead of what impacted is that the exposure of COVID-19 had challenged for a demonstration of community activities among the Rohingya people. The obvious concerns of the coronavirus caused ‘massive and rapid’ aid staff reduction in the camps. The limited number of essential staff guided the emergency services there. Resultantly, the refugee community themselves were obliged to maintain their hygiene in the face of unknown precarity of the disease and the crisis aroused from lockdown. More than 200,000 Rohingya people participated in the community awareness build-up and prevention program. Considering this rare scope of participation in the camp activities in Bangladesh, this study unfolds the emerging agency among the Rohingya people in the camps. To that end, it has explored relevant reports, academic studies, news and particularly the Inter Sector Coordination Group’s (ISCG) week reports in a qualitative setting. After an exploration of the secondary data, it finds that Rohingya people had exercised their forgotten spirit of agency for their well being during the COVID-19 epidemic. Thus, the study comprehends that there is no scope to consider refugees as ‘bare lives’, ‘bogus’ and undone instead there should have scope to utilize their agencies in leading their life as a human being.

KIRIL SHARAPOV, EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY; GAVIN MACLEAN, EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY; TAULANT GUMA, EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY; KIRSTEN MACLEOD, EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY
SAFE ENVIRONMENT? UNDERSTANDING THE HOUSING OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Asylum seekers living in the UK are one of the most marginalised groups in society, with most living in poverty and experiencing poor health. Private firms have increasingly played a key role in the provision of asylum accommodation in recent years (The Refugee Council 2019). Since 2010, the Home Office contracted out its asylum services to various private companies, a provision which had previously been the responsibility of local authorities (Darling 2016). Underpinned by a neoliberal logic (Davies 2017), the policy shift towards outsourcing of asylum accommodation to private firms has led to what Darling (2016) refers to as a ‘depoliticising effect’, transforming asylum from a human rights issue into an ‘economic’ concern. Recent moves by private firms to relocate asylum seekers into ‘safe environments’ have been widely criticised, particularly for the difficulties in maintaining physical distancing in new crowded, shared spaces that increase the risks of exposure to Covid-19 within an already ‘high risk’ group (BBC News, 2020). Inspired by calls for more ways of conducting research ‘not on but with’ those individuals whose lives are being studied (Berg and Nowicka 2019; Sinha and Back 2013), this paper reports on research co-produced with a grassroots organisation based in Scotland advocating for human rights and dignity for asylum seekers and refugees living in the UK. The paper will present findings from ongoing collaborative digital ethnography with asylum seekers to understand the role of housing provision and the privatisation of asylum services in exposing these individuals to Covid-19.

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DANIEL GHEZELBASH

THE END OF THE RIGHT TO SEEK ASYLUM? COVID-19 AND THE FUTURE OF REFUGEE PROTECTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the institution of asylum, exacerbating longer term trends limiting the ability of asylum seekers to cross-borders to seek protection. As a result, the early months of 2020 saw an effective extinguishment of the right to seek asylum. This paper examines how this played out in Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States. National and regional responses varied, with Australia and the United States effectively ending asylum seeking. In Europe, some states upheld the right to seek asylum by exempting asylum seekers from general border closures, while other countries used the crisis to suspend the right to seek asylum. Finally, this paper explores strategies for restoring and protecting the right to seek asylum beyond the pandemic.

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INTENDED AND UNINTENDED EFFECTS OF ANTI-COVID 19 MEASURES ON CENTRAL AMERICAN ASYLUM SEEKERS IN MEXICO.

During 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic has been spreading to almost all countries around the globe. The closure of borders between Guatemala, Mexico and the United States of America affected and increased vulnerabilities of people on the move, such as Central American asylum seekers. Containment measures such as border closures led to the paralysation of transport and new forms of immobility and protracted displacement of refugees caught in between.
Large numbers of refugees have already been facing protracted displacement in Mexico. Central American asylum seekers looking for refugee protection in Mexico or awaiting asylum hearings in the US under the MPP-Program had already been facing the saturation of services towards this population. But also, the capacities of non-governmental institutions providing humanitarian aid were affected. Missing access to basic services such as housing, water, health care and xenophobic prejudices toward strangers put refugees in a vulnerable situation under the spread of the pandemic.

The here proposed paper aims to analyse the effects of anti-Covid measures on the refugee population in Mexico from a gendered analysis. It hereby includes both, populations participating in the MMP programs and refugees looking for refugee protection in Mexico itself. Drawing on pre-pandemic fieldwork, is a preliminary study that draws on a wide arrange of data available in social networks and international press. It critically reflects on the guaranties of Human Rights under the “new normality” of emergency regimes and the intersections of vulnerabilities and exclusion in the context of the pandemic.

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THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON IDPS AND NON-DISPLACED PERSONS IN YEMEN

This paper examines the impacts of COVID-19 on the health, livelihoods, housing, education, and security of IDPs and non-displaced persons in Yemen based on the findings of an online survey commissioned by IDMC in November 2020. The study utilised innovative technology to deliver anonymous, opt-in surveys to web users across the country. Over 1,600 respondents completed the survey, including 381 IDPs currently displaced by conflict, violence, and disasters, and 1,037 non-displaced persons.

While the findings suggest that the pandemic has had a negative impact on the lives of most respondents, the reported impacts were more severe for IDPs in several aspects. Not only were IDPs more likely to report that they or someone in their household had experienced symptoms of coronavirus, but they also faced greater barriers in accessing treatment. At the same time, a higher proportion of IDPs than non-displaced persons reported disruptions to their children’s education and changes in their housing situation because of the pandemic, as well as a deterioration in their treatment for other chronic diseases.

The paper begins with an overview of the methodology and limitations of the study, before analysing the results of the survey. It then concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of the findings for practitioners and policymakers, including the role of remote data collection in research on forced migration.

MURAT YÜKSEL, ADANA ALPARSLAN TÜRKEŞ SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SYRIAN SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN TURKEY

Syrian refugees, a big majority of whom are living under temporary protection status which grants them limited rights regarding access to health care, education, other social services and formal labor market in Turkey. Seasonal agricultural work, which is already primarily informal, segmented and defined by high levels of vulnerabilities at both the social and the economic level, is one of the few income-generating options for Syrian refugees in Turkey.
In this paper I analyze the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Syrian agricultural workers in Adana where the number of Syrian refugees is considerably higher. How has the pandemic affected the agricultural labor market conditions for Syrian refugees in Adana? Are there any vulnerabilities that the pandemic has created anew or intensified existing ones for refugee agricultural workers compared to local agricultural workers and urban refugee workers?

The preliminary findings of the research show that pandemic affected the agricultural labor market conditions negatively in general but so far in terms of its economic impact there is no significant difference between refugee and local agricultural workers. Also the economic impact of the pandemic for refugees in agricultural labor market was less than the urban labor market. Pandemic created more economic vulnerabilities for urban refugee workers than agricultural refugee workers.