

IASFM20 Podcast Series Full Transcript Episode 12. Voice of Participants Part 3

Opening credit

Forced migration due to war, conflicts, disaster, climate change and urban development impacts is a critical issue requiring attention from multiple stakeholders. The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration, or IASFM, is a global interdisciplinary association committed to advancing research, policy analysis and understanding of forced migration and displacement. The 20th Conference of IASFM was held on the 21-23 January 2025 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, with a topic of “Forced Displacement in an Urbanizing World”. This audio series, supported by the Washington University in St Louis, presents various reports from this conference.

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Host: Dr. Akino Tahir

Hello everyone, welcome back to IASFM20 Podcast Series. I am Akino, your host for today. This is the third episode where we have voices of participants, both those who presented at panels and those who attended the panels. This time, we have our field hosts, Marofa Sharifi and Aireen Andal, talking to people. And this episode contains their reports.

First up is Marofa with Abdul Khaliq from RAIC, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Information Center, a refugee-led organisation based in Indonesia. He was speaking at the panel titled “The power of proximity: refugee-led solutions from within Indonesia’s forcibly displaced community”. The panel presented on Day 1 of the conference highlighted the remarkable achievements and innovative strategies these organizations employ to tackle urban displacement and foster resilience.

Host: Marofa Sharifi

Dear listeners, we have Mr. Abdul Khaliq with us today.

Guest: Abdul Khaliq

Thank you for having me. My name is Abdul Khaliq but usually I go with... by AK.

Host: Marofa Sharifi

The panel you had, you were a speaker earlier, was the power of proximity. If you could tell us what is the power of proximity?

Guest: Abdul Khaliq

Well, proximity is something that you could use in different ways, but the thing that we try to address, or the way that we try to address was that how we want to use proximities, or we use proximities in terms

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of closeness or close collaborations with different RLOs or Refugee Led Organizations and initiatives and how these organizations come together to work together because they are all responding to the same problem that displaced communities are dealing with. So in those terms, we had our panel where we talked, and I believe that with the proximity, we could get a lot of extra resources. Not only that, but also expertise from the experience of other RLOs, who have dealt with a situation that you have not yet dealt. So it would be in a way that you would scratch my back and I would scratch your back. Everyone helps each other to deal with the problems that they are facing.

Host: Marofa Sharifi

How this refugee led organization or solutions that you seek through proximity with other organization... how does this lead to an advantage?

Guest: Abdul Khaliq

When we are talking about solutions that were provided or being provided by the refugee led initiatives of, let's say refugee leaders, so usually these are in context with what we are dealing with. As a displaced person, I know the difficulties of a displaced community because I'm living there. So those perspectives, are ... it is a natural human instinct, I would say, when you are dealing with a problem, then you would come up with better solutions to deal with the problem. So it is the same way with the displaced people or refugees. These solutions that are provided by these refugees leaders or refugees led initiatives.

There is a chance that they are more likely to work, rather than one person who suggests any solution who does not have any idea what actually the displaced community are facing and dealing with. So in general, when we are talking about proximity as well, these refugees led initiatives, or in general I could say the leaders would come together and sit, talk with each other, and they would have different type of suggestions until they come up with the solution that they think or most of them agreed which could help them solve their problems. So that is in a way, a power that all of them will have when they come together and sit together and have a discussion. So it is power of being united.

Host: Dr. Akino Tahir

Next, Aireen talked to panelists from a literary community called Semut Merah Kaizen. Their panel on Day 2 of the conference, titled "The Pen and The Path: Literary Community and the Role for Advocacy", discussed and delved into the power of literary communities as platforms for empowerment in amplifying the voices of forced displacement survivors and fostering advocacy through creative expression. Here we have all four panelists, Tami Kira, Ike Dian Puspita, Marina, and Nur Ade Irawan, sharing their stories.

Host: Dr. Aireen Andal

You really have a great panel and very inspiring one. So when talking about your panel, what is the first word that comes out of your mind?

Guest: Tami Kira

Beauty.

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Guest: Marina

Storytelling.

Guest: Ike Dian Puspita

Excited.

Host: Dr. Aireen Andal

Can you please describe your panel in three sentences?

Guest: Nur Ade Irawan

Okay, if I have to explain our panel in three sentences, I will probably say the first sentence is literary community rocks. And then the second one is narratives can make movement. And then the last sentence, let's work together.

Host: Dr. Aireen Andal

So what is your why? Why this panel? Why this initiative? Why this advocacy?

Guest: Marina

My why is love. Love of making impact, love of create something, love of human being, and love of humanity.

Guest: Nur Ade Irawan

I see that it's not that much literary community that have movement in the human rights issue. So many of literary community only focus on the literature and artistic side of the literary. But in Semut Merah Kaizen community, we see that we actually, as a literary community member, have the potential to do something bigger about that. And that's why we created this panel to see the possibility of the collaboration between literary community and the stakeholders of the issue in human rights.

Host: Dr. Aireen Andal

One of you did a documentary. We're interested in why you chose a certain medium to express the realities that you have witnessed.

Guest: Ike Dian Puspita

The first one is because I like movie. And I like to make creativity with video. So I choose a short movie. And second, because the accident (in the movie) is related with my neighborhood.

Host: Dr. Aireen Andal

We're moving to an auditory experience, which is a song. Why did you choose to write a song?

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Guest: Tami Kira

Because who sings well, prays twice. I want the song to be heard to the children who deserved to be heard. I'm representing them, who are the survivors. And I think I want to pray for them too. That's why I'm singing.

Host: Dr. Akino Tahir

Next one up is Marofa's short conversation with Ashley Cureton about her presentation in a panel on Displacement and Belonging from Day 2 of the conference. Ashley's presentation, "Girls Rule Art! Exploring Forcibly Displaced Girls' Engagement in Arts-Based Programs", explores the forcibly displaced girls' motivation to engage in arts-based activities like dance, drama, and theater.

And following that conversation, Marofa also talked to one of the session attendees, Professor Nicole Ives from McGill School of Social Work in Canada, who shared her impression of the overall panel.

Host: Marofa Sharifi

We have Dr Ashley with us here all the way from USA. So your panel's master theme the use of art based approaches to support refugee girls' sense of belonging. Why this theme? And how did you come to... how did you decide to do this theme?

Guest: Ashley Curaton

Yeah, that's a great question. So to give context, I do have a background in the arts, in musical theater. So I love to employ the arts as a methodology. One that I've used for myself, but one that I felt it would be great to explore this topic among migrants and refugee youth. Many of them express in other studies... I've been doing this work for about 15 years within school settings here in the US as well as in other global settings, I found that many of the youth, they wanted outlets. They wanted spaces where they could process their losses but also really think of ways to thrive in their new environments. And so sometimes words... it can be difficult to name that. But through art, whether it's drawing or singing or drama, that can be a mechanism to engage in some of their prior experiences, as well as what they hope to gain in their new environments. It's also a way for them to tap into their creative sides. When you can't use words, but you want to use other mechanisms to do so this is a great strategy. That's what motivated me.

Host: Marofa Sharifi

Anything that you found that through your research, that might be something that we didn't expect, but you found it through your study? Or anything else that you found out through your study?

Guest: Ashley Curaton

Several findings. One, as a strategy to deal with feelings of homesickness and loss, many of the refugee girls, they use the arts as a way to process. Whether it was engaging in writing, short stories, or poetry, or using drama, many of them, many of the young girls would process what their experiences were like. And so once again, if they didn't want to necessarily have a very formal conversation with someone, they could use other avenues to do so. It definitely was a mechanism to combat those feelings of loss or homesickness.

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Many of the girls, they also intentionally sought out other girls who had similar backgrounds. So whether they were also refugees, they came from the same country, there was a slew of variables. Many of them, they liked that, right? It was a mechanism to retain some of their cultural practices. For example, there were some girls from Nepal and they were concerned that they wouldn't be able to engage in dance when they came to the US, so they actively sought out other girls from that country, or even from that region that prioritized dance, and they started a club. And they did a performance, and it was a way for them to bond, to build community, a sense of belonging, and to feel like they weren't abandoning a very important cultural practice, and dance is very important in Nepal. So there were examples like that throughout the study, where young girls, they were intentional about connecting with others who had comparable identities to ensure that they could retain their cultural practices.

And I would say another finding relates to the girls wanting to have a community out, away from the boys. So it was gendered in the sense that they were like, hey, you know there's things that we're having to contend with as girls. Adolescents.. well they're not saying this... I'm saying this now, the Dr Ashley Curaton is saying this.. as adolescents, they're going through a lot. And so many of them felt like, we want our own space. As girls, things that we're having to contend with that the boys may not really be aware of or privy to, so let me find other girls and let's do make artistic type activities to fuel that. So those were some of the findings from the study.

Host: Marofa Sharifi

It's like cultural belonging and not letting go a part of them and finding something in common. Yes, I think that's something I think universal because I myself I'm a refugee and I really feel every word that I hear you said because I can tell how it feels and how it is. I was also a bit surprised that how common this is, like I didn't know if it's my thing and we are looking too and other people, some other parts of the world is doing the same. So it's, it's for all of us.

Guest: Ashley Curaton

Thanks for sharing some of your background. But yeah, I've noticed, among just young people, since that's what I focus on, there is this fear that they won't be able to exercise their own identities, and their backgrounds. They want to retain that. And so I think any programs or initiatives that can ensure that young people can still engage in cultural practices and with people who have comparable identities as them, I think is important.

Host: Marofa Sharifi

What would you like to see as a result of such studies and panels that you had today? What would you like to see?

Guest: Ashley Curaton

I think because arts-based programs have been proven to be effective, I think there should be more of it. In the US context, arts-based programs are not required within educational spaces, and so in a lot of US schools, they're often removed, or if there are funding issues, those are typically the first to go. So whether it's in formal school settings or informal settings, like in community organizations, I think it's

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imperative to have arts-based programs and methodologies as a possible outlet for young people to process and, once again, to build community and connections and to retain their cultural backgrounds. And so I think if schools and institutions can be intentional about creating spaces for that, I think it would be ideal. And then, once again, having other spaces for young people to process. Some young people, they're able to engage in verbal communication and share how they feel. Others through the arts, that can be another way for them to process. Like, there is loss, right? There is some trauma associated with being a refugee. And so if it would be ideal if there were different mechanisms or spaces for people to process that loss. So arts is just one way to do it.

Host: Marofa Sharifi

Dr. Nicole, you are one of the attendees in the panel, the use of arts-based approaches to support refugees girls. What is your impression of this panel?

Guest: Prof. Nicole Ives

I thought it was an excellent panel, and it was fun. It was very interactive. There were many different ways of looking at the subject. And one of the presenters, after a series of presentations, she switched it up and she gave us all pieces of paper that she had prepared. And it was... we could make a little book. And so she gave us an art project that she had used with refugees, refugee youth and children and youth. So it was a great way to help us understand where she was coming from and the type of method that she was using, and give us a chance to do it ourselves. So it was a lot of fun. And she was also very engaging, because I'm not an artistic person, but she was very encouraging. It was just... you could imagine that she was doing this with the youth, and so I think made everyone feel comfortable that we can all doodle, we can all have fun. So it was a great takeaway.

Host: Marofa Sharifi

How impactful do you think such studies are when it comes to the context of supporting refugees, and especially the girls, which is the focus of this study?

Guest: Prof. Nicole Ives

So that's one of the things that I love about this conference, and this is my third conference. I went to one in Cairo and then I went to one in Thessaloniki, in Greece. I. And what I love about this conference is that it brings together people from all disciplines. So there were many social workers in this group, but not everyone. So you also had people who were from discipline of education. And there are some people who I think were from geography. So, it really brings together people who think in different ways to focus on this one topic and that's what's needed. Because if we stay in our silos, if we stay only focused on our own piece, we won't get anywhere.

Host: Dr. Akino Tahir

Last one. We have Reqqa Salem, from the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) in Germany.

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Guest: Reqqa Salim

I am very impressed and excited and also inspired. I'm a PhD candidate who works with unrecognized camps in Jordan. And I was having some trouble in my work, had some questions, some points of self critique, and I just came across a local researcher here in Indonesia who just presented her work. We're working in very similar topics, and I think she solved already the issue that I was having. So it's an amazing exchange of solutions and knowledge.

I mean, of course, it's my work, and I would like to believe that it has an impact, not just for people who are currently dealing with these situations, but for the future. I really like how this conference brings together not only researchers, but also different groups of activists and individuals who were themselves displaced. And I really, really like the exchange that humanizes the process and makes it very real and truly inspiring.

I think the reason we are all here or in any other platform that talks about displacement should be the human who became a displacee or the migrant who chose to move. And if anyone has the... or should have the space to be here, it's them and us by extension, not the other way around. And I think this conference does this very well.

Host: Dr. Akino Tahir

That was our episode for today. Thank you Abdul Khaliq, SMK collective, which is comprised of Tami Kira, Ike Dian Puspita, Marina, and Nur Ade Irawan, Ashley Cureton, Nicole Ives, and Reqqa Salem for sharing your thoughts with us. And as always, a lot of love and thanks to our wonderful field hosts, Marofa Sharifi and Aireen Andal, as well as our field team for their hard work.

We'll be back, next time sharing about some of the creative installations at the conference. In the mean time, thank you for listening to this episode. I'm Akino as your host today will stop here. Stay tuned and wishing you a lovely day ahead.

Closing credit

The 20th International Association for the Study of Forced Migration Conference is organized by the Resilience Development Initiative in collaboration with the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada.

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