



Refugee Research Network

Research Digest

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Special issue on Displacement and COVID-19

The RRN Research Digest provides a synopsis of recent research on refugee and forced migration issues from entities associated with the RRN and others.

A message from the RRN editorial team:

The novel Coronavirus has rapidly and drastically changed everything about our daily lives. Its effect on the global scale is by far no less. We want to make sure refugees and displaced populations (as well as other vulnerable populations) are not overlooked during this pandemic. In this special issue we have curated news, material and resources that address the implications of COVID-19 on displacement (populations and policies). The objectives of this effort are to:

- [To learn from the past about epidemics, outbreaks and health among refugee populations.](#)
- [Keep the impact of COVID-19 on displaced populations at the center of public and policy discussions.](#)
- [Respond to anti-immigration rhetoric during the pandemic and leverage it afterwards.](#)
- [Identify local and global responses and solutions to support refugee communities.](#)
- [Trace resources that can support refugees, sponsors, researchers and frontline workers.](#)
- [Find ways to stay connected through physical distancing.](#)

While there hasn't been a lot of peer-reviewed work published yet (especially in social sciences) about COVID-19 and displacement, we encourage you to point us to or share with us any relevant contributions, resources or virtual events to include in the digest and share with our wide network and social media followers at dinat@yorku.ca.

Stay safe, stay connected,

Dina Taha and RRN digest editorial team

Featured

COVID-19 and the Displaced: Addressing the Threat of the Novel Coronavirus in Humanitarian Emergencies, Refugees International. This new global report surveys how this global pandemic is impacting—and will continue to impact—more than 70 million refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), and other forced migrants around the world. “The scale and speed of the pandemic underscore how deeply interconnected the world’s populations are. Nevertheless, at precisely the moment when global solidarity and cooperation are essential, many nations are turning inward as they seek to protect

their citizens. But a virus does not respect borders. Nor does it discriminate. A truly effective response, not to mention a morally correct one, also must not discriminate” [Read the full report here](#).

What have we learned from the past?

- 1- **Elias, C. J., Alexander, B. H., & Sokly, T. (1990). Infectious disease control in a long-term refugee camp: the role of epidemiologic surveillance and investigation. *American Journal of Public Health*.** This report demonstrates the role of epidemiologic surveillance and investigation in the control of infectious diseases in a long-term refugee camp. [Read more.](#)
- 2- **Truman, B. I., et al (2009). Pandemic influenza preparedness and response among immigrants and refugees. *American Journal of Public Health, 99(S2), S278-S286*.** Vulnerable populations and their service providers need information to overcome limited resources, inaccessible health services, limited English proficiency and foreign language barriers, and inexperience applying recommended guidelines. This article summarizes advice from an expert panel of public health scientists and service program managers. [Read more.](#)
- 3- **Spiegel, P. B., & Nankoe, A. (2004). UNHCR, HIV/AIDS and refugees: lessons learned. *Forced migration review, 19, 21-23*.** Refugees are often doubly discriminated against firstly, for simply being refugees and secondly for being falsely accused of bringing HIV/AIDS with them into host countries. In order to reduce stigmatization and to ensure that the whole population has access to HIV/AIDS prevention and care interventions, UNHCR is working to ensure that refugees are integrated into host government HIV/AIDS policies and programmes. [Read more.](#)
- 4- **Wickramage, K., et. Al. (2018). Missing: where are the migrants in pandemic influenza preparedness plans?. *Health and human rights, 20(1), 251*.** Evidence indicates that social stigmatization and anxieties generated by restrictive immigration policies hinder undocumented immigrants’ access to health rights and minimizes immigrants’ sense of entitlement to such rights. [Read more.](#)

How is COVID-19 affecting displaced populations and migration policies?

- 5- **Canada’s changing coronavirus border policy exposes international students’ precarious status, Carlo Handy Charles, *The conversation*, March 19, 2020.** Carlo analyzes the repercussions of Canada’s border closure on temporary residents, such as international students in Canada and abroad. We have learned that Shortly after Carlo’s commentary, the Canadian government responded and passed guidelines making it clear that international students were exempted from the travel restrictions. [Read more.](#)
- 6- **Changes to the asylum and immigration process due to Covid-19, Right to Remain (March 25):** Because of the Coronavirus public health crisis, there have been some temporary changes to the asylum and immigration process in the UK. This blog post tracks the most important ones. [Read more.](#)

- 7- **The world's largest refugee camp prepares for COVID-19, by Gaia Vince, BMJ: British Medical Journal (March 25, 2020).** Nearly a million refugees live in overcrowded conditions in the camps of south Bangladesh. This article reports on the growing fears of an imminent, catastrophic outbreak of COVID-19 from overcrowding to poor sanitary conditions and tracks UN efforts to respond. [Read more](#). Also related check: [Rohingya refugee camps a Covid-19 time bomb](#).
- 8- **Crisis within a crisis: immigration in the United States in a time of covid-19, By Muzaffar Chishti and Sarah Pierce, Migration Policy Institute, March 26, 2020.** The anxiety triggered by the pandemic for long-term residents and recently arrived immigrants alike, legal and unauthorized, is exacerbated by fear of immigration enforcement, suspension of immigration benefits processing, and the high number of asylum seekers and other migrants in immigration detention. [Read more](#).
- 9- **Five Ways COVID-19 Is Changing Global Migration, by Erol Yayboke, Center for Strategies and International Studies (March 25, 2020).** This article traces how in addition to the grand disruptions to daily life, the pandemic could be fundamentally changing the face of global migration in at least five keyways. Including, increasing global inequality, the continuation of travel restrictions, and an increase in "irregular" migration. [Read more](#).
- 10- **COVID-19: Agencies temporarily suspend refugee resettlement travel, UN News (March 17, 2020).** Two UN agencies (UNHCR and IOM) announced last Tuesday that they are temporarily suspending resettlement travel for refugees. The spread of the new coronavirus has seen countries drastically reduce entry into their territories, while international air travel has been restricted in some regions. [Read more](#).
- 11- **How Will the COVID-19 Pandemic Reshape Refugee and Migration Governance? by Kristin B. Sandvik and Adèle Garnier, PRIO blogs (March 27, 2020).** This blog post identifies marginalization, legal distancing and the ambiguity of care as the key characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic response currently reshaping refugee and migration governance. [Read more](#).
- 12- **Third World refugees battle COVID-19 without basics such as clean water to wash their hands, by Richard Warnica, National Post (March 20, 2020):** Doctors and nurses in the field face a stark dilemma: stay and serve as supplies dry up or come home while they can, knowing they will not be replaced. [Read more](#). Also related check: [The struggle to stay safe from COVID-19 in a refugee camp](#).
- 13- **COVID-19 delays refugee hearings and puts lives in limbo by Licia Corbella, Calgary Herald (March 21, 2020).** The coronavirus forced the [Immigration and Refugee Board](#) to postpone all in-person hearings and mediations, other than detention reviews, effective March 17 through to April 5 at the earliest. [Read here](#).
- 14- **Leaving no-one behind: Ensuring people seeking asylum and refugees are included in COVID-19 strategies, Refugee Council of Australia: (March 25, 2020):** The RCOA hosted a teleconference with 65 representatives of organisations around Australia, to bring together concerns and ideas about the most pressing issues for people seeking asylum and refugees resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read the summary here](#).

How Refugees are stepping-up and how might we leverage the pandemic against anti-immigration rhetoric?

- 15- **Refugees to the rescue? Germany taps migrant medics to battle virus, Reuters, by Riham Alkousaa and Paul Carrel (March 25, 2020).** Five years ago, the arrival of a wave of refugees caused much consternation and fueled support for Germany's far-right. Now, the country is turning to its migrant community to plug an anticipated shortage of medical staff battling the coronavirus. [Read more.](#)
- 16- **Covid-19: call for fast-track registration of refugee doctors in UK, by Diane Taylor, The Guardian (March 25, 2020):** Hundreds of refugee doctors have called on the government and the General Medical Council to fast-track their accreditation so they can help the NHS tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. [Read more.](#)
- 17- **What happens to freedom of movement during a pandemic? By Sandro Mezzadra, Open Democracy (March 24, 2020).** This article demonstrates how Restrictive border measures endanger the lives of vulnerable populations for whom movement is a means of survival. "The arguments are on our side... the virus does not respect borders." [Read more.](#)

What are some global and local responses and solutions to the pandemic and its effect on displacement?

- 18- **Three ways our programmes are fighting coronavirus, Norwegian Councils on Refugees (March 28, 2020):** The NCR is tracing 3 ways they are fighting the spread of the virus among the world's most vulnerable communities. [Read more here.](#)
- 19- **Live blog: Refugees in the COVID-19 crisis:** this is a liveblog that traces some of the ways that UNHCR staff, people forced to flee and supporters around the globe are taking action to stay smart, stay safe and stay kind. [Read more.](#)
- 20- **No Safe Place: Refugees and the Coronavirus, Kenneth E. Miller Ph.D., Psychology today (March 28, 2020).** Raising awareness of a looming pandemic while offering unrealistic preventive methods may heighten people's fear and deepen their sense of vulnerability. This article has recommendations to support vulnerable displaced populations across the globe including delivering clean water and soap to refugee populations as soon as possible, installing hand-washing stations in refugee camps, and an immediate release of Asylum-seekers held in detention centers if they pose no threat. [Read more.](#)
- 21- **Q&A: Access to health services is key to halting COVID-19 and saving refugee lives, By Jonathan Clayton, UNHCR News (March 27, 2020).** Ann Burton, Chief of UNHCR's Public Health Section, outlines the dangers the new coronavirus poses to refugees and internally displaced people and describes how the agency is working to slow its spread, reduce its impact and save lives. [Read more.](#) Also related, check [Refugees and displaced highly vulnerable to COVID-19.](#)

What are some helpful resources for refugees, sponsors and frontline workers?

- 22- **IOM Mobility Restrictions COVID-19:** To better understand how COVID-19 affects global mobility, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been working to map the impacts on human mobility, at Global, Regional and Country level. Subsequently, the IOM have initiated an interactive map that reflects the following activities: COVID-19 Travel Restriction Monitoring and COVID-19 Country Points of Entry (PoE) Status Baseline Assessment. [Access here.](#)
- 23- **UN Corona Portal and News updates:** Readers can find information and guidance on the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) from the UN, World Health Organization and UN agencies [here](#) or subscribe for daily UN news [here](#).
- 24- **CCR COVID-19 Resources:** The Canadian Council for refugees has curated a list of public documents from different institutions in Canada including the IRCC, IRB, Federal courts and UNHCR. [Access here.](#)
- 25- **BC Refugee Hub COVID-19 Updates:** The BC Refugee Hub will be curating information about COVID-19 relating to refugees and refugee claimants in British Columbia. This webpage will be updated regularly as more information becomes available. [Access here](#)
- 26- **COVID-19 Resources for Sponsors & Newcomers, Ottawa-Carlton District School Board:** This resource links to multi-language resources and factsheets on COVID-19 that can be shared with refugee sponsors and refugees sponsored under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR), the Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR), the Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) and the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) programs that have already arrived in Canada. [Access here.](#)

Upcoming Events (despite physical distancing!)

- 27- **Refugee leadership in response to COVID-19 global online conference:** Refugees are coming together to show resilience and readiness in the response to covid-19. [More information here.](#)
- 28- **Upcoming event, Covid-19 in Latin America: tackling health care & other impacts for vulnerable migrant populations, MPI webinar, April 2, 2020.** [More information here.](#)
- 29- **A webinar series as part of the new Colloquium on Refugees, Migrants & Statelessness** on What the COVID-19 Pandemic Means for Refugees. The Webinar takes place on Wednesdays April 1 from 11AM-12PM CST. [More information about the series here.](#)

Watch

[Refugee women in Zaatari camp are making soap to prevent Coronavirus.](#)