



Research Digest

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

NEW RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Bennani-Taylor, S., & Meer, N. (2024). [Processing payments, enacting alterity: Financial Technology in the everyday lives of asylum seekers.](#) *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 50(10), 2384–2402. This article examines how the Asylum Support Enablement (ASPEN) card – a prepayment card provided to UK asylum seekers – enacts their alterity in ways that problematize the techno-optimist narrative of digital technologies as promoters of financial inclusion. First, the authors trace the migration of Prepaid Financial Services' prepayment technology from the humanitarian context to its adoption in UK state practices, considering what this means for the mobility of policy norms inscribed in digital technologies. Second, building on the concept of 'alterity processing', they examine how the UK Home Office co-constructs asylum seekers as 'deviant subjects' and its bureaucratic entities as indispensable. Third, they analyze how this co-construction is used to justify asylum seekers' exclusion from mainstream banking, rendering them dependent on the ASPEN card. Finally, they elucidate how the card's surveillance, encoded rules, and induced precarity govern asylum seekers' behaviours. The researchers thus demonstrate how financial technologies – as deployed across humanitarian and statist welfare contexts – engender new lines of marginalization and forms of social control.

Bernier, A., McCrimmon, A., Nsair, S., & Hans, H. (2024). [Autism in the Context of Humanitarian Emergency: The Lived Experiences of Syrian Refugee Mothers of Children on the Autism Spectrum.](#) *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 39(2), 1–21. This study explored the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees accessing supports and services for their autistic children in Alberta, Canada. Using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), in-depth interviews with three participants led to seven shared themes regarding parental experiences with the Syrian crisis, access to supports and services, barriers to resettlement, and sentiments regarding their resettlement. Findings are explained using migrant adaptation models to situate practice within a social justice orientation by understanding the perspectives of vulnerable migrant populations. Practical implications

include ways to benefit refugees, imbue culture within the practice, inform policy initiatives, and highlight the importance of trauma-informed care.

D’Orsi, C. (2024). [Fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution to be persecuted again? The case of LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum seekers in Uganda.](#) *International Journal of Refugee Law*. This work focuses on the legal promotion and protection of the rights of LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers and refugees in Uganda. Uganda’s treatment of LGBTIQ+ communities is one of the harshest in Africa, with the adoption of legal instruments criminalizing LGBTIQ+ people and same-sex relations. Refugees have never been granted refugee status based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The Ugandan Commissioner for Refugees systematically rejects asylum claims based solely on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This article shows that, despite efforts by UNHCR and non-governmental organizations, Uganda remains a country hostile to LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers, forcing them to conduct a discreet life to avoid being penalized for their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The ambiguous positions of African institutions, such as the African Union, do not help secure such people’s rights and protection. Serious changes are needed if Uganda is to adhere to human rights principles that safeguard the rights of LGBTIQ+ communities.

Gordon, S. L. (2024). [South African attitudes towards refugee settlement: Examining the importance of threat perceptions.](#) *Journal of Refugee Studies*. Compared to many other countries, South Africa has a liberal refugee settlement policy, but public hostility towards refugees in the country is a serious obstacle to refugee protection. To understand what is driving anti-refugee sentiment amongst the masses, this study investigates refugee settlement policy preferences in the post-apartheid nation. Data analysis showed a robust relationship between immigrant threat perceptions and policy preferences. This finding is consistent with integrated threat theory, highlighting the damaging effects of widespread negative stereotypes about immigrants in the country. Other notable drivers of attitudes identified include economic anxiety and religiosity. Subjective knowledge, by contrast, only had a weak effect on attitude formation. The study concludes by discussing future research opportunities on anti-refugee sentiment in an African context.

Ongwech, O. D., Schulz, P., & Erdem, Z. P. (2024). [Recognizing the agency of forced migrants with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.](#) *Journal of Refugee Studies*. In recent years, scholarship and policy reports have slowly attended to the lived realities of forced migrants with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). However, these emerging discourses are typically characterized by a violation-centric view that focuses on queer migrants’ vulnerabilities and experiences of victimization. Yet, what remains strikingly absent from existing research and advocacy engagement is how refugees with diverse SOGIESC across different settings also actively seek out services and build support networks; how they engage with their experiences on their own terms, resist violence, and exercise various forms of agency. In this field reflection, we emphasize the importance of recognizing how and under what conditions forced migrants with diverse SOGIESC exercise

agency. We put forward illustrative examples based on field reflections of working with refugees with diverse SOGIESC, opening new perspectives for research, policy, and activism

REPORTS AND POLICY BRIEFS

[Access, Power, Trust: Lessons from Humanitarian Aid in Protracted Displacement.](#)

(2024). PRIO. Ensuring accountability – from finance and bookkeeping to pervasive issues of transparency, trust and legitimacy – is central to the effectiveness of humanitarian aid. Considering a range of humanitarian actors, over the long internal displacement history of Muslims from northern Sri Lanka, we find that access, power, and trust are key to the success or failure of attempted accountability practices. Accountability-conducive relationships are based on dynamic and transparent interactions, and fostering these relationships necessitates recognizing, navigating, and challenging, pervasive asymmetries across contexts.

[Return, Reintegration and Re-migration.](#) (2024). OECD. Return migration has emerged as a critical policy concern for both destination and origin countries. While policy attention in destination countries has been focused on assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programs, particularly for migrants with expulsion orders, these efforts represent only a fraction of broader return movements. This report analyzes the scope and characteristics of different categories of return migration. It draws on three workshops, held in Tunis, Rabat and Brussels, that discussed return migration in different contexts. It examines the multiple factors that influence migrants' decisions to return to their countries of origin and their reintegration at home, including the role of family and community. The report emphasizes the pre-existing structures and networks of returning migrants in their origin countries and their role in supporting different types of return migrants. The report also looks at potential re-migration.

[Supporting Self-Sufficiency: Considerations for Refugees' Transition out of Sponsorship and Complementary Pathways Programs.](#) (2024). Migration Policy

Institute. A growing number of countries are experimenting with and building humanitarian protection pathways that involve volunteers from receiving communities in supporting the welcome, settlement, and integration of refugees. These programs include different types of sponsorship pathways and vary considerably in their design. However, a common challenge that often receives insufficient attention, is how refugees will transition out of these programs and independently navigate life in their new community and country. Getting this right matters for several reasons: A timely, well-structured, and clear transition strategy can facilitate a smooth end to program support, advance refugees' self-sufficiency and integration, promote volunteer retention and social cohesion, and boost a program's long-term sustainability. This MPI Europe issue brief identifies lessons learned about how program organizers and volunteers can best support refugees' transition out of sponsorship and complementary pathways programs and toward longer-term integration. It highlights common obstacles to a smooth transition and promising practices, with examples from European, Canadian, and other programs.

[The State of Global Mobility in the Aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#) (2024).

Migration Policy Institute. The robust recovery of migration and travel following the COVID-19 pandemic-induced slowdown has vividly highlighted the resilience of human mobility. Yet even as cross-border movement has rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, it has also changed in notable ways. This report—a collaboration between the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and MPI—seeks to understand how the volume, composition, and distance of movements, as well as the terms under which people move, are changing in the aftermath of the pandemic. While existing data do not make it possible to sketch a full picture of mobility around the entire globe, this study brings together IOM flow monitoring data from different regions to examine the changing face of migration, both regular and irregular.

NEWS AND BLOG POSTS

[Ghana accused of expelling Fulani asylum seekers from Burkina Faso by James](#)

[Courtright](#), April 18, 2024. **The New Humanitarian.** While Ghana has welcomed thousands of Burkinabé refugees fleeing escalating jihadist violence across the border, Fulani rights groups allege that it has also been expelling ethnic Fulani asylum seekers, targeting a community unfairly accused of supporting the insurgency. Since early 2022, at least 15,000 Burkinabé have fled into northern Ghana, escaping an escalating conflict between the military, who are backed by armed civilian auxiliaries, and the two main jihadist groups – the al-Qaeda-linked JNIM, and so-called Islamic State. Across the Sahel, close to four million people have been displaced by the expanding conflict.

[Global Affordable Housing Shortages Can Harm Migrant Reception and Integration](#) by

Benedicta Solf, Lindsey Guerrero, and Selena Sherzad, March 20, 2024. Migration Policy Institute. The lack of affordable housing worldwide is becoming a global crisis. An estimated 1.6 billion people—one-fifth of humanity—lack access to adequate housing and basic services, according to the UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, and this number could rise to 3 billion by 2030. Over the last decade, housing prices have grown faster than incomes in most countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This article examines how the housing crisis affects refugees, other forcibly displaced people, and other types of migrants, including in their relations with host communities. While a rapid influx of new arrivals may contribute to cities' shortage of homes, housing problems are often created by broader issues and are pre-existing. Yet the perception that vulnerable new arrivals are to blame for a dearth of affordable accommodation can create tensions with host communities as well as barriers to integration.

[Human rights groups air concerns and personal testimonies on government migration](#)

[bill](#) by Evelyn Manfield, April 15, 2024. **ABC News.** The Australian federal government's proposed changes to migration law are "entirely incompatible with human rights," and the government should abandon its bill, human rights groups have told a Senate committee

scrutinizing the legislation. Last month, the government introduced legislation which would allow it to jail people refusing to cooperate with deportation for between one and five years. The government has said the bill focuses on about 150 people currently in immigration detention, and avoiding deportation efforts.

[Offshore Processing Offers False Hope for United Kingdom](#) by Madeline Gleeson, April 22, 2024. **Australian Institute of International Affairs.** The influence of Australia's deterrence-based asylum policy is spreading across Europe and the United Kingdom, with serious consequences for both human rights and the rule of law. Obstacles to the implementing "offshore processing," in particular, might force States to refocus on their asylum processing capabilities. The prospect of "externalizing" asylum had long featured in European debates about refugee policy, and has received renewed attention since 2015 when record numbers of people began arriving in the region, fleeing conflict and persecution in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Australian-style "offshore processing" – that is, the forced removal of asylum seekers to other countries to have their protection claims processed there – has particularly piqued the interest of some governments.

[Seeking asylum status, Chinese migrant in Colorado shares story](#) by Alan Gionet, April 18, 2024. **CBC News Colorado.** The growing number of people coming into the United States from China over the southern border includes individuals coming to Colorado. However, they are not often seen and make few demands for services, making their arrival less well-known than migrants coming from places like Venezuela. "I think they're leaving because China is becoming more and more authoritative," said immigration attorney Margaret Choi. "I think it's getting more and more restrictive. And they are not allowed to criticize the Chinese leadership or the Chinese policy."

[What is the UK's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda and how many could go?](#) April 23, 2024. **BBC News.** The Rwanda bill was introduced to allow the scheme to go ahead after the Supreme Court ruled it was unlawful. The government said that any asylum seeker entering the UK "illegally" after January 1, 2022, from a safe country such as France, could be sent to Rwanda. They would have their asylum claims processed there, rather than in the UK. If successful, they could be granted refugee status and allowed to stay in the landlocked east-central African country. If not, they could apply to settle in Rwanda on other grounds, or seek asylum in another "safe third country." No asylum seeker would be able to apply to return to the UK. Ministers say the plan will deter people from arriving in the UK on small boats across the English Channel.

EVENTS, RESOURCES, DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

[Migration Disrupted: How technological transformation is reshaping human mobility](#) by Toronto Metropolitan University and Bridging Divides. This conference brings together an interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral group of researchers and leaders from Canadian and international civil society, business and government to reflect on the implications of the rapid development of ADTs for migrant integration in Canada and around the world. The kickoff panel on May 7, 2024 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM EDT, will ask how technological transformation will shape the future of migration in Canada, and our four

plenary sessions on May 8 and 9 will engage four main themes: (1) Who belongs? How do ADTs impact migration, citizenship and democracy? (2) Help or hindrance? What potential do ADTs have to address the inequities of health care in Canada and around the world? (3) How can social and technological infrastructures shape the experience of migrant integration and foster inclusive cities? (4) What is technology's promise for the future of migrant workers? This conference has both in-person and virtual options.

[Sharing Settlement and Integration Practices that Work](#) by Pathways to Prosperity: Canada. Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), P2P's Promising Practices project highlights promising practices in immigrant settlement and integration with an empirical basis for their effectiveness. This includes video interviews of those who developed and are administering the practices, and briefs that highlight the key aspects of the practices that make them effective and innovative. To date, there are 46 videos and briefs for this purpose.

[Trauma's Children: Life in the shadow of massive loss](#) by SBS Audio. It is well understood that survivors of war, genocide or abuse may pass on trauma to their descendants. For example, research into the experience of Holocaust survivor families suggests that transmission may even extend to grandchildren. What happens to the generations who come after violent histories? How can individuals and communities process and remember tragic events we did not witness? To explore these issues, this podcast episode interviews Linda Thai, a former child refugee from Vietnam who grew up in Australia and works as a somatic therapist based in Alaska. Linda is passionate about breaking the cycle of historical and intergenerational trauma and specialises in supporting the adult children of refugees and migrants. Hers is a compelling story of surviving displacement, post-traumatic resilience and transforming the legacy of ancestral grief.