



Research Digest

No. 169 | October 2, 2025

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

Coutin, S. (2025). [On the Record: Papers, Immigration, and Legal Advocacy](#). **Open access book.** Immigrant residents seeking legal status in the United States face a catch-22: the documents that they must present to immigration officials—bank records, paycheck stubs, and contracts in their own names—are often challenging for undocumented people to obtain. In this book, Susan Bibler Coutin analyzes how undocumented immigrants and their legal representatives attempt to surmount documentary challenges. Based on four years of fieldwork and volunteer work in the legal services department of an immigrant-serving nonprofit and in-depth interviews with those seeking status, *On the Record* explores these complex dynamics by taking seriously both documents themselves and the legal craft that has developed around their use.

Barboza, J. Z. (2025). [Undesirable but Unreturnable Migrants: the Challenges of Dealing with Criminal Migrants in Need of Protection](#). **Brill Nijhoff, International Refugee Law Series, Volume: 25.** This book studies how States regulate the situation of migrants in need of international protection who have a criminal background or pose a threat to public order. Regulating the situation of these migrants is a challenge to States, which may sometimes resort to measures that violate human rights. The book thus evaluates the solutions applied, identifying best practices and suggesting a possible human rights compliant solution for this situation.

Baú, V. (2025). [Social cohesion in protracted displacement: Limits to peace between young people in Camps](#). *International Social Science Journal*. This article brings to light the limits to peace that currently exist between young people in Kakuma refugee camp through a framework of social cohesion. The main drivers of conflict among the vastly diverse youth of Kakuma are examined to provide evidence of the gaps in social cohesion that endure in the camp. A framework of analysis built around notions related to social

cohesion is applied to the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with humanitarian professionals working in the camp. The discussion arising from the findings offers key considerations on humanitarian work with young people in contexts of protracted encampment such as Kakuma, and on how such work can more effectively address cohesion among diverse youth. Ultimately, the insights offered want to inform the trajectory of humanitarian work with encamped young people, with the view of enhancing peace, wellbeing and cohesion in camps.

Fee, M. (2025). [Displacing refugees: Resettlement and the reconstitution of families. *Social Problems*](#). Sociologists traditionally use integration as the framework for studying the benefits and shortcomings of refugee resettlement, which is considered one of three durable solutions for forced migrants. This paper problematizes dominant narratives of resettlement as a time of integration and a solution to displacement. The author demonstrates how the resettlement process becomes displacing for refugees, as it can reconstitute kinship structures in three distinct ways: 1) by prolonging earlier separations caused by forced migration; 2) by creating new separations that become difficult to rectify; and 3) by bringing together outdated family units. Consequently, resettlement engenders social, emotional, and economic harms that are further disruptive to refugees' lives. By centering refugees' experiences, this paper makes visible the tensions caused by this humanitarian program and offers a novel framework for understanding the early stages of a refugee's resettlement. With a focus on how initial resettlement has a displacing effect on refugee families, the author contributes to scholarship on immigrant incorporation, immigrant families, and sociological understandings of displacement.

Rees, P., Ibreck, R., & Weslety, S. (2025). [The 'unfair' Refugee Agency: UNHCR accountability after protests and violence. *Journal of Refugee Studies*](#). Open access. Urban refugees increasingly resort to sit-ins outside United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) offices because they lack avenues for accountability. Our fieldwork reveals their experiences of neglect, mistreatment, and violence and the ways that these are compounded by UNHCR's responses to protests, generating deep mistrust. Drawing on interviews with refugees in three protest sites and a workshop with legal practitioners, we document disturbing accusations, implicating UNHCR in human rights violations. We reflect on these findings and explore the possibility of transforming the agency's accountability relations in the context of declining budgets and influence. We argue that the agency must abandon its securitized response to refugee-led protests and adopt a 'networked accountability' approach, engaging with the plural authorities that hold legitimacy in refugee protection. Although UNHCR is currently structurally dependent upon major donors and host states, it must embed accountability relations with refugee-led organizations (RLOs), NGOs, and legal practitioners to fulfil its mandate and protect refugees.

See, J., & Asmawi, A. (2025). [From Theory to Classroom: Implementing Translanguaging Pedagogy for Refugee Learners. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*](#), 41(1), 1–32. This study bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks and classroom practice by designing a translanguaging pedagogy (TP) module for volunteer

teachers at an alternative learning centre serving refugees in Malaysia. Grounded in a comprehensive needs analysis and refined through expert consensus, the module emphasizes bilingual proficiency, interactive teaching methods, and diverse learning materials to enhance English communication skills. Focused on pedagogical usability and teacher engagement, the research evaluates the module's effectiveness through teachers' perceptions and interactions with students, rather than language proficiency outcomes. Findings demonstrate TP offers a practical, inclusive approach to meeting refugee learners' unique needs, contributing to the development of adaptable, effective teaching strategies that translate theory into impactful classroom practices for marginalized communities.

Telfah, R. (2025). ["I Am a Princess Who Moves Around a Lot": Syrian Refugee Women and the Shifting Roles and Responsibilities During Early Settlement in Southwestern Ontario](#). *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 41(1), 1–20. This article takes a feminist approach to understanding Syrian refugee women's early settlement experiences in small southwestern Ontario communities. It draws on interviews with Syrian refugee women who arrived in Canada with their families, sometimes without husbands, in 2016–2019. It is argued that the refugee journey and resulting shifts in Syrian women's reproductive activities, including when they settle in rural/small-town southwestern Ontario, help them find a voice, giving them greater independence and power within their families. This study emphasizes the gendered nature of household production and contributes to literature on social reproduction by exploring the often-overlooked context of refugee resettlement. Findings highlight the necessity for policies that provide better support for refugee women during early settlement.

REPORTS AND POLICY BRIEFS

[Aid Worker Security Report 2025 – Defenceless: Aid worker security amid the humanitarian funding collapse](#) by Abby Stoddard, Meriah-Jo Breckenridge, Monica Czwarno, Mariana Duque-Díez. (2025). *Humanitarian Outcomes*. This year's Aid Worker Security Report comes at a major inflection point for international humanitarian assistance and during an alarming new peak of violence against humanitarians. The 2025 edition – the 15th since data tracking began – was almost not produced after the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD), lost its US government funding when the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was dismantled. The funding crisis now rocking the sector comes on top of escalating conflicts and a steep erosion of respect for humanitarian norms and the laws of war by state actors – amplified in some places by public smear campaigns against aid organisations.

['Going to the Supermarket was Hard': Pandemic Foodscapes and Unsettled Food Practices of Refugees in the Waterloo Region](#) by Ramachandran, Sujata; Onyango, Elizabeth; Si, Zhenzhong; Ahmed, Zack; Eguiguren, Mercedes; Crush, Jonathan, and Arya, Neil. (2025). *Migration & Food Security (MiFOOD)*. In this paper, researchers examine how the 'new normal' of pandemic-living transformed the local food environment in Ontario as pandemic foodscapes. Using selected findings from mixed methods research with

a small sample of recently resettled refugees in the Waterloo region, they evaluated how these changes affected their grocery shopping and food-sourcing habits. The study found that participants spent more time acquiring food from a reduced number of food sources and experienced an overall weakening of their household food security. The decline in food access and availability was most pronounced for the ethnocultural foods that immigrants and refugees preferred to consume.

Nicaragua: UN Experts warn of escalating repression reaching beyond borders. (2025).

United Nations Human Rights Council. Nicaragua's Government is expanding its repression of perceived opponents far beyond its own borders, targeting Nicaraguan citizens abroad as part of an intensifying campaign to silence critics in exile, the UN Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua said in a new report. The report, presented to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, documents how the Government of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo has targeted thousands of Nicaraguans abroad – many who fled the nation following a bloody 2018 crackdown – through a series of severe measures including arbitrary deprivation of nationality, entry bans, denial of passports, confiscation of property, digital surveillance, threats, as well as intimidation and punishment of relatives who remain in Nicaragua.

Sudan's information war: How weaponised online narratives shape the humanitarian crisis and response. (2025). Reliefweb.

Since the outbreak of full-scale conflict in Sudan in April 2023, the country has faced one of the world's most acute humanitarian crises. One key dimension of this conflict has been a deepening emergency in the information domain. Misinformation, disinformation and hate speech have been used as deliberate tools of war, weaponised to distort narratives, fracture social cohesion and obstruct humanitarian access. It has been directly linked to devastatingly violent impacts on communities. At the same time, connectivity blackouts, fractured media ecosystems and the politicisation of communication channels have made safeguarding trustworthy information for communities affected by crises more urgent and more difficult. This report aims to provide practical insights and policy guidance for humanitarian responders, donors, media practitioners and Sudanese civil society.

NEWS AND BLOG POSTS

Human mobility under threat: How is Latin America responding? by Lina Arroyave & Christy Crouse, September 1, 2025. Dejusticia. In 2025, migration policies from the Global North intensify securitization and externalization of control, undermining fundamental rights in Latin America. This blog examines how the region, despite setbacks, can sustain rights-based responses and build alternatives to the criminalization of human mobility.

Not enemies, but people: Why the world needs to rethink the language of war by Martin Danahay, September 24, 2025. The Conversation. The term “narcoterrorist” conflates the U.S. internal “war on drugs” and external “war on terror” and suggests drug smuggling is punishable by death without trial. Canada, incidentally, has followed the lead of the U.S. by designating a list of drug cartels as terrorist organizations. This means Canada is now

involved in the expansion of violence against people associated with drug smuggling or drug use when they're labelled terrorists. It also aligns Canada with the American "war on drugs." The problem with both terms — the "war on drugs" and the "war on terror" — lies in how they serve to justify killing people. Violence is portrayed as an appropriate response to a threat from an "enemy" rather than an attack on people who may or may not be linked to drugs or terrorism.

Sri Lanka: Detainees Decry Poor Conditions and Indefinite Detention in Welisara Detention Centre, September 16, 2025. **Global Detention Project.** According to the testimonies received by the GDP, a group of at least ten people from numerous countries spanning Asia and Africa—Pakistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malaysia, China, among others—have been detained for months at the Welisara Detention Centre (outside Colombo) with no end in sight. They claim to have been initially arrested as part of an investigation into their statuses; however, after languishing two months in prison, they were eventually transferred to immigration detention without any charges being pressed.

The Mediterranean: Both a graveyard and a bottomless money pit due to EU border policies by Luna Vives, September 22, 2025. **The Conversation.** Over the last decade, European governments have invested heavily to militarize their sea borders and outsource control responsibilities to partners in Africa and the Middle East. But despite exponentially growing border budgets, people continue to take to the sea to reach EU territory, encountering violence and death. It's time to admit that this repressive strategy has failed and to ask what should come next.

The perfect storm: Why immigration has become the scapegoat for our age of crisis by Alan Gamlen, September 23, 2025. **360Info.** Economic shocks, social strains, and rising inequality have unsettled democracies everywhere. In this atmosphere of fear and anger, immigration has been cast as the culprit, offering populists a simple story for a complex age.

Uganda has signed a deal with the US to take asylum seekers – what's behind it and what's at stake by Franzisca Zanker & Ronald Kalyango Sebba, September 18, 2025. **The Conversation.** Uganda has agreed to take on an unspecified number of third-country nationals who have a pending asylum claim in the US but cannot return home due to safety concerns. In other words, these are people who should likely be protected as refugees, but are no longer wanted in Donald Trump's America. Uganda is set to receive development funds in return. It also retains discretion on a case-by-case basis.

EVENTS, RESOURCES, DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

On the Move: Rapidly Evolving Migration Trends and Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, Migration Policy Institute. This timely and thought-provoking recording on migration in the Americas features discussion of the new book, *On the Move: Migration Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2025) by Andrew Selee, Valerie Lacarte, Ariel

G. Ruiz Soto, and Diego Chaves-González (published by Stanford University Press), surprising patterns, and the urgent policy questions facing Latin America and the Caribbean today.

Podcast episode - Refugee inclusion in practice: Experiences, outcomes, and impacts.

PROSPECTS podcast - Refugees at Work. This final episode of the series examines how the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) shapes refugee livelihoods and host community economies. Svein Erik Stav (Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research) and Tewodros Aragie Kebede (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Norad) share the opportunities, challenges, and policy lessons from countries applying the HDPN approach.

Small Business, Big Impact: Immigrant Hiring and Integration in Five Canadian Cities.

Research Matters. This virtual presentation explores how Canada's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are navigating labour shortages and what can be done to better meet labour needs by leveraging the pool of immigrant talent. SMEs make up 99% of employer businesses in Canada, yet many struggle to grow due to limited access to skilled workers. Immigration is key to filling these gaps, but newcomers often face barriers to employment and employers often miss out on their skills and talents. This session shares insights from interviews with SME leaders, service providers and policymakers on how to better connect immigrant talent with local business needs. Speakers are Alice Craft, Senior Research Associate, Conference Board of Canada, and Federica Guccini, Researcher, Conference Board of Canada. This virtual event is on October 8th, 1:30 to 2:30 PM ET.

22nd Annual Immigration Law and Policy Conference. **Migration Policy Institute.** The hybrid conference will feature thoughtful policy and legal analysis and discussion of some of the most important immigration issues that have surfaced in the U.S. policy debate, bringing together leading experts, policymakers, attorneys, advocates, and more. This year's sessions include: State of Play: Mass Deportation Campaign Hits the U.S. Economy, Communities, and Public Opinion; Expanding Access: Scaling Immigration Legal Services for Communities and the Nation; a keynote conversation with Fareed Zakaria; and, A New Era: Immigration Enforcement Above All Else. This event will be on October 9, 2025, 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM ET.