



Research Digest

No. 175 | January 15, 2026

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

Haugen, H. Ø., & Wang, B. (Eds.). (2025). [Handbook on Migration to China](#). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. **Open access book.** This insightful Handbook explores the dynamics of historical and contemporary migration flows to China from across its bordering regions, Asia and other continents. It analyzes the social, economic, cultural, and legal developments that arise from migration to China.

Amouri, I. E., & Sabchev, T. (2026). [What has been the impact of western governments' laws and policies on the mental health of asylum seekers and refugees? A systematic-narrative hybrid literature review](#). *Journal of Migration and Health*, 13, 100382. **Open access.** This article reviews research on the causal impact of Western governments' laws and policies on the mental health of asylum seekers and refugees. The synthesis shows that, over the last two decades, Western governments' laws and policies around detention, access to basic rights, asylum procedure, and reception have had a substantial and almost exclusively negative impact on the mental health of protection seekers. Based on the findings, the authors urge legislators and policymakers to consider the long-term consequences and costs of the laws and policies they introduce, within and beyond the realm of mental health. In addition, they highlight the need for more research on governmental measures that are likely to have a positive impact on the mental health of asylum seekers and refugees.

Brunner, L. R., Shokirova, T., Gamal, M., & Stein, S. (2025). [Higher education's care/control of refugee and displaced students](#). *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 12(2), 11–33. There is growing interest in higher education's intersections with displacement, a term used here to encompass the movement of refugees, asylum seekers, and those from otherwise forced or precarious international migration backgrounds. In particular, higher

education institutions' infrastructure and student support services are sometimes leveraged in response to displacement crises. The authors propose a conceptual distinction between higher education's reception and recruitment of displaced students, which share similar characteristics yet function in structurally different ways. They suggest the concept of 'implicated subjects' can help those embedded in higher education institutions move beyond overly simplistic victim/perpetrator/bystander categorizations in relation to supporting displaced students. They also offer one social cartography and two sets of hyper-self-reflexive questions as pedagogical tools to examine the imprint of a colonial system on both our higher education institutions and those of us who work within them. They suggest adopting an ongoing practice of hyper-self-reflexivity in order to respond differently to the impacts of current displacement crises and better prepare us for those to come.

Dewansyah, B. (2025). [From Australian influence to Rohingya refugees: A systematic literature review of asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia](#). The Indonesian Journal of Socio-Legal Studies, 4(2). Open access. The fact that Indonesia hosts asylum seekers and refugees attracted not only policy debate and media attention but also academic research. However, no systematic review has been conducted to assess the scholarly literature on this topic. This article is intended to fill this gap by presenting a systematic literature review (SLR) on asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia. There are five major themes in the reviewed literature: (1) the focus on the Indonesia – Australia relationship; (2) people smuggling; (3) refugees' journey and living conditions in Indonesia; (4) Rohingya refugees; (5) legal protection and refugee status. However, this review also found some topics understudied as avenues for further research, such as the policy-and-lawmaking process, and the officials' discretion or discretionary decision-making in implementing law and policy related to refugees, as well as the role of religion and ethnicity in law and policy on this matter. More importantly, this body of literature informs valuable findings, such as refugees' self-surrender to the immigration detention centers and an acute silos tendency in Indonesian refugee governance that can contribute to the theoretical debate in this field.

Sağrıç, Ş., Mackenna, B., & Yu, T. (2026). [Mapping the global north bias in forced migration studies: Three decades of publication and Citation Trends](#). Journal of Refugee Studies. Open access. Academic literature on forced displacement has been criticized for disproportionately focusing on the Global North, despite the significant concentration of refugees and internally displaced people in the Global South. This creates a substantial gap between where refugees are located and where research is produced. The findings show that (1) most research focuses on the Global North, (2) most authors are based in the Global North, (3) Global North authors dominate publications on the Global South, and (4) Global North authors receive more citations, even when studying the same country as Global South researchers. These results prove a persistent regional bias favoring the Global North in forced migration research.

REPORTS AND POLICY BRIEFS

[Comprehensive guide to anticipatory action for IDPs and refugees centred on the MENA region](#). (2025). Climate Centre. The Climate Centre today published a

comprehensive guide to anticipatory action for displaced people and refugees centred on the Middle East and North African region. While displacement in MENA is caused predominantly by conflict, climate change is acting as a threat multiplier, according to the Practical guide to co-production for anticipatory action with IDPs/refugees, and the two together are driving complex patterns of displacement. The guide includes “information, tools, short case studies and practical activities that provide actionable, useful and eventually impactful outcomes relating to co-production of AA for displaced people,” it says. The guide also draws on lessons and case studies derived from the Istibak (“anticipate” in Arabic) project of the UK-funded Weather and Climate Information Services programme, which is aimed at strengthening the climate resilience of IDPs, refugee populations and host communities in Iraq and Yemen through forecast-based early action.

Building skills and decent work opportunities for migrant women in Italy by Amira Badri. (2025). **Migration Policy Centre.** Despite Italy’s long history of migration and the crucial role migrant women play in sectors such as care work, hospitality, and agriculture, their participation in stable and skilled employment remains limited. Recent research on migrant women in Italy highlights persistent challenges in achieving decent work, equitable access to training, and meaningful social inclusion. Many of these women arrive with valuable informal experience or partial qualifications from their countries of origin, but struggle to have their skills formally recognised within Italy’s labour system.

Navigating Climate, Conflict, and Migration: Insights from Ethiopia and the East and Horn of Africa. (2025). **IOM.** This report examines the intricate relationship between climate, human security and migration in Ethiopia and the broader East and Horn of Africa (EHoA) region, with the goal of informing regional mobility governance. Drawing on IOM’ s Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS) data from February 2018 to May 2024, this study addresses the growing concern about how environmental and security compounding pressures are shaping human mobility patterns across the region.

Sudan Displacement and Return Overview. (2025). **IOM.** The Sudan Displacement and Return Overview combines multiple Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) methodologies, including data from over 12,000 locations, 185 localities, and all 18 states in Sudan. In addition to regular, nationwide DTM data collection with key informants, the report includes data collected through face-to-face household surveys, with both displaced and returnee households. Findings include granular information on humanitarian needs and access to services, movement intentions, movement restrictions, and demographic profiles, alongside other key indicators.

“We Have Abandoned Them”: The Impact of Renewed Conflict and Funding Cuts on Women, Girls, and Women-Led Organizations in Eastern DRC. (2025). **Women’s Refugee Commission.** Since early 2025, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has seen an escalation of violence against the backdrop of a broader, decades-long conflict. Decades of instability in the DRC have taken an especially heavy toll on the health and well-being of women and girls. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a defining feature of the

conflict, and women and girls have historically experienced limited access to healthcare, disrupted education, and entrenched cycles of poverty. The complex challenges of the DRC's escalating humanitarian situation have been further compounded by the sudden cuts in US foreign assistance in January 2025. The immense challenge of responding to increasing needs with fewer resources is particularly acute for DRC's women-led organizations (WLOs), which remain the primary providers of services for women and girls in North and South Kivu.

NEWS AND BLOG POSTS

[Fight or Flight?](#), December 17, 2025. **The Asylumist**. The author writes, “I recently met with the family of a man from El Salvador who we'll call Jorge. Jorge was detained by ICE and is facing imminent deportation. He has been in the United States for more than 10 years, has no criminal convictions, and has several relatives with legal status, including his child (a U.S. citizen) and his mother (a permanent resident). Jorge had faced danger in El Salvador: criminals tried to force him to join their gang. They also murdered his uncle. Based on these facts, Jorge is legally eligible to apply for asylum, Withholding of Removal, relief under the UN Convention Against Torture, and Cancellation of Removal. The question for him and his family is whether fighting his case and trying to avoid deportation is a good idea.”

[The paradox of North Korea's Overseas Labour Programme](#) by **Yeji Kim**, January 7, 2026. **Oxford Refugee Studies Centre**. North Korea's Overseas Labour Programme exploits workers while simultaneously offering them a window to the wider world, efforts to close this system may not, on their own, reduce exploitation. Yeji Kim shares the findings of her research drawn from interviews with former North Korean workers.

[What makes people welcome or reject refugees? What research in Germany reveals](#) by **Tobias Hillenbrand**, December 15, 2025. **The Conversation**. Across the EU, immigration is one of the most divisive topics in politics today. Germany, a country once known for its “Willkommenskultur” (welcome culture), is a case in point. The German chancellor, Friedrich Merz, has recently said that Syrians no longer have “grounds for asylum in Germany”, and that they will be encouraged to return voluntarily. Some could also be deported in the near future. Polling suggests that tough approaches to immigration resonate well with the public, reflecting a broader shift toward more negative immigration attitudes.

[5 migration trends in the Americas to watch in 2026](#) by **Jordi Amaral**, December 18, 2025. **Americas Migration Brief**. 2025 has been a year of much change across the Americas. The Trump administration's draconian policies have left the US-Mexico border quiet (thus far) and have terrorized local communities across the US. The repercussions of Trump's policies across the hemisphere have been many, including a lack of funding and support for host countries across the region, new pressures to reintegrate returnees, and stalled progress on cooperation. Regional, collaborative, and constructive approaches to migration management have been thrown into disarray by the Trump administration's

personalistic, bilateral-focused negotiations and incessant flip-flopping. (Amaral is a freelance researcher and doctoral student at George Washington University).

2025 in Review: Australia immigration policy turns back toward dog whistles and drift by Abul Rizvi, December 10, 2025. Pearls and Irritations. 2025 marked a turning point in Australian immigration policy, as long-term planning was abandoned and discriminatory rhetoric returned to the political mainstream.

EVENTS, RESOURCES, DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Seminar: Understanding political agency: Migrant perspectives from Africa. Migration Policy Centre. Join Franziska Zanker as she explores and conceptualises political migrant agency, drawing on a new research project that examines political migrant agency in Malawi, Liberia, Kenya, and Ghana. In this seminar, Dr. Zanker will argue that understanding the political agency of migrants in post-colonial African states matters for policy-makers even beyond the continent. She will also outline ways we can study it in order to gain new insights. This hybrid event will be on January 20, 2026, 12:00-13:00 CET.

Webinar: Unwelcome to Denmark: The Paradigm Shift and Refugee Integration Professor Michelle Pace (Roskilde University). Oxford Refugee Studies Centre. Unwelcome to Denmark: The Paradigm Shift and Refugee Integration examines how Denmark's increasingly restrictive migration policies have reshaped the lived experience of refugees and the country's approach to integration. The book traces the political and ideological forces behind the so-called "paradigm shift", exploring how policy, public discourse, and bureaucratic practice have combined to create a system that often prioritises deterrence over inclusion. Through analysis, testimony, and contextual insight, it highlights the social, psychological, and democratic consequences of a regime that has become markedly harsher in recent years and one that serves as a "model" for others to emulate. Professor Pace will offer a critical reflection on what it means to seek refuge in a country that simultaneously promises protection and cultivates un-welcomeness. Michelle Pace is Professor in Global Studies at the Department of Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University, Denmark. She is also Associate Fellow, Europe Program at Chatham House, London. This event will be on January 21, 2026, 12:00PM-1:00PM EST.