



# UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT:

## HOW CAMPUSES ARE HELPING REFUGEES

"For more than 200 years, our tradition of welcoming immigrants from around the world has given us a tremendous advantage over other nations. It's kept us youthful, dynamic, and entrepreneurial. It has shaped our character as a people with limitless possibilities — people not trapped by our past, but able to remake ourselves as we choose."

— President Barack Obama



International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) members at Harvard Law School pose with client portraits at the launch of IRAP's Inside Out campaign. (Photo: IRAP Chapter, Harvard Law School).



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# Students and Universities Can Make a Difference

The U.S. Department of State enjoys a unique vantage point on the countless efforts undertaken by individuals and organizations to address the global refugee crisis. The purpose of this Toolkit is to share some of the powerful examples we have seen with you: students, professors, and university administrators who want to contribute to the global refugee crisis response.<sup>1</sup>

The examples we have collected were provided by our contacts in the policy, humanitarian, and academic communities.<sup>2</sup> We share them to inspire other campus communities to make a difference for refugees around the world and close to home.

This Toolkit is a living document, and represents the first version of an evolving effort. We invite your feedback and input to improve it. We also want to know how you put these resources and ideas to work.

Please send suggestions, stories, or photos to [nolostgeneration@state.gov](mailto:nolostgeneration@state.gov).

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<sup>1</sup>Throughout this document we use the term "university" as shorthand for all institutions of higher education. Many of the activities described in this document are taking place at a wide variety of post-secondary institutions, including community colleges and vocational schools.

<sup>2</sup>This toolkit provides illustrative examples of specific organizations and programs in the United States that may assist refugees; their inclusion and links to the websites of organizations and programs do not constitute an endorsement by the State Department of those organizations or programs, of any activities they have undertaken or may in the future undertake, or the specific content of their websites.

The refugee crisis is not just a Syrian problem, nor a Middle Eastern problem, or a European or an African problem. It is a global challenge of historic proportions and dimensions, and it tests our values, our self-confidence, and our very humanity. We have to do all that we can to respond effectively, and the most effective response of all, my friends, involves the pursuit of peace.

-- Secretary John Kerry, January 2016  
Secretary Kerry Meeting with Refugees in Silver Spring, Maryland

## How the United States is Helping Refugees

### The Largest Humanitarian Donor in the World

The United States is the largest single humanitarian donor, providing billions of dollars per year to deliver life-saving assistance to millions of the world's most vulnerable people. The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) eases suffering and works to resolve the plight of persecuted and uprooted people around the world. We do this on behalf of the American people by working through multilateral systems to build global partnerships, promoting best practices in humanitarian response, and ensuring that U.S. foreign and national security policies respect humanitarian principles. The United States has long been the leading donor to a wide variety of international and non-governmental

organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Through humanitarian funding, the United States:

- Provides food, shelter, water, medical care, and other urgent relief to people in conflict zones, including millions of refugees;
- Supports a wide range of services including programs to enhance protection, psycho-social counselling, and primary education;
- Supports host governments and communities that are straining to accommodate large numbers of refugees.

### The Largest Resettlement Program in the World

The United States remains the largest resettlement country in the world, receiving more than half of all refugees resettled each year through UNHCR. The United States has welcomed more than three million refugees since 1975, helping them build new lives in all 50 states. These refugees have added an immeasurable amount to the richness of American culture, contributed to our economic strength, and honored our core values as a nation. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program embodies our values of compassion, generosity, and leadership in serving vulnerable people.

Refugees survive terrible ordeals: torture, upheaval, perilous journeys, and tremendous loss. They were forced to leave their home countries because they have experienced or fear persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinions, or social group. Today there are nearly 20 million refugees in the world fleeing conflict and repression. For a small

number of the most vulnerable of these refugees, the United States strives to provide a new start through refugee resettlement.

The Obama Administration is committed to maintaining a robust refugee admissions program – a longstanding and important component of America's overall effort in support of vulnerable people around the world. President Barack Obama has signed a Presidential Determination authorizing the admission of 85,000 refugees in fiscal year 2016. This is an increase over the fiscal year 2015 ceiling of 70,000. The United States has also announced a plan to increase the number for fiscal year 2017 to 100,000.

In addition, the United States will continue to play a leading role in addressing the dire humanitarian situation caused by the violence in the Middle East. The President has directed his team to significantly increase the number of Syrian refugees the United States will accept in the coming years. The U.S. government recognizes that admitting more Syrian refugees to the United States is only part of the



UNHCR's Christina Farah speaks with a group of children in Chekka, Lebanon. [Photo: Shawn Baldwin]



solution, but the President believes this policy decision is consistent with our responsibility to do more.

It is important to note that refugees undergo by far the most rigorous level of security checks required of any traveler to the United States. These checks involve multiple U.S. agencies, including the Departments of State and Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Terrorist Screening Center, the Department of Defense, and the intelligence community. Our admissions process is rigorous and deliberate in order to safeguard national security and public safety as the United States seeks to fulfill its moral responsibility to help those in need. The United States will continue to be a leader in helping to protect the world's most vulnerable refugees through resettlement efforts, while ensuring that the security of our nation is preserved.

The American people have legitimate concerns about protecting the homeland against groups and individuals who want to harm us; many refugees are fleeing persecution from those same groups. This toolkit aims to bring together Americans and newly arrived refugees, so they can connect on a people-to-people level and see that they share the same dreams of a more secure, prosperous and hopeful future for themselves and their families.



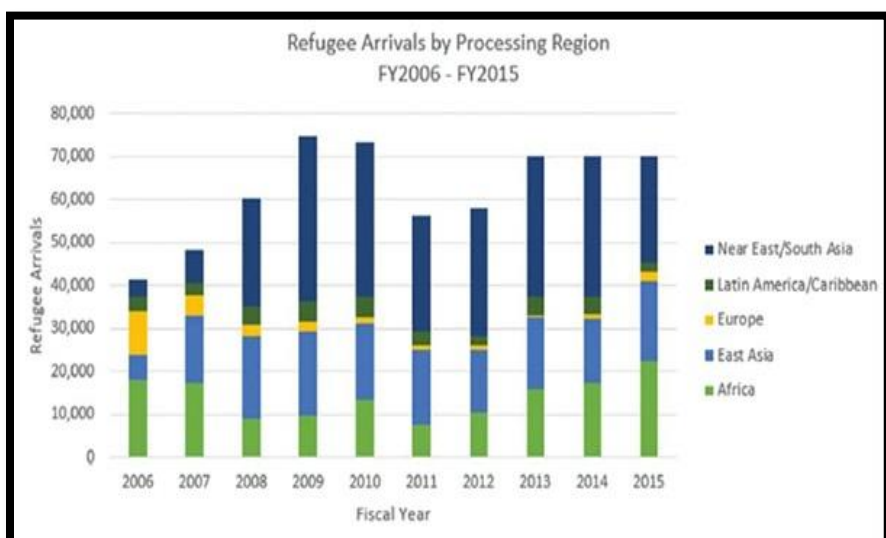
Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Anne C. Richard visited with refugee children at the Sed El Boucherieh Intermediate School for Girls in Beirut, following her participation in the Third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria in Kuwait in April 2015. The United States has provided more humanitarian assistance to help Syrian refugees and displaced people than any other single donor. [Photo: State Department]

## 6 Ways Students Are Helping Refugees

University students are finding creative and powerful ways to support refugees across the globe and here at home. Students can take action to address the global refugee crisis that has become one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. Here are some ways students are getting involved:

**1. Joining campus groups that focus on refugee issues...or starting them!** Campuses across the United States have formed groups to bring together students interested in volunteering, fundraising, and informing their communities about the refugee crisis. Below are some examples, but there are many more. If no group exists on your campus, you can read below about how to start one:

- ◆ [The No Lost Generation Initiative](#) (NLG) is a network of student organizations created at The George Washington University (GWU). GWU's flagship chapter works to [mobilize their college community](#) in the international effort to expand





Eritrean refugee children at the Endabaguna transit center for unaccompanied children in Ethiopia. [Photo: State Department]





International Refugee Assistance Project members discuss casework at American University's Washington College of Law. [Photo: Doug Jackson]



Guilford College students, faculty, and staff welcome refugees. [Photo: Kat Miller]




education for Syrian refugees. They increase public awareness of the refugee crisis through press and events, fundraise for partner organizations providing educational support in the region, and connect students to relevant volunteer opportunities. GWU's NLG chapter received a grant from the [Malala Fund](#) for their work and has hosted lectures and hackathons, working with a non-governmental organization that provides educational materials to refugees. They have built on their success to create the broader NLG Initiative, which they are expanding to campuses across country. Contact:

[nolostgenerationgw@gmail.com](mailto:nolostgenerationgw@gmail.com), [www.nlgoncampus.wordpress.com](http://www.nlgoncampus.wordpress.com) 

- **[International Refugee Assistance Project](#)** is a national, student-driven organization that allows law students working with pro bono supervising attorneys to provide comprehensive legal representation to individual refugees seeking resettlement. IRAP has successfully assisted more than 3,000 refugees in life or death situations secure resettlement to a third country, and has chapters at 27 law schools in the U.S. and Canada. Chapters are student-initiated and directed. Contact: [info@refugeerights.org](mailto:info@refugeerights.org)  

- **[Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team](#)** is a community of volunteer digital mappers who use open data to help create maps that assist relief organizations as they respond to humanitarian or political crises. Students can review the [OSM Tasking Manager](#) site to find mapping projects in refugee

camps all over the world and they can visit the [MapGive](#) site, created by the State Department's Humanitarian Information Unit, to learn how easy it is to become a volunteer digital mapper. Contact: [info@hotosm.org](mailto:info@hotosm.org)

- **[Students Organize for Syria \(SOS\)](#)** is a student-led movement dedicated to raising awareness about the crisis in Syria and promoting humanitarian assistance. Chapters exist at universities across the country. SOS is currently running [Paper Airplanes](#), an English tutoring program for college-aged Syrian students looking to take the TOEFL exam. The program matches Syrian students with an American tutor who meets with them twice a week over Skype during the course of a semester. You can read news coverage [here](#). Contact: [info@organize4syria.com](mailto:info@organize4syria.com)   
- **[Wesleyan Refugee Project \(WRP\)](#)** is student-run group at Wesleyan University that organizes volunteer opportunities for Wesleyan students, raises money to support refugee aid organizations abroad, works to identify scholarship opportunities for Syrian refugee students, and holds speaker panels about the Syrian refugee crisis. You can read more about their work [here](#). Contact: [cksmith@wesleyan.edu](mailto:cksmith@wesleyan.edu), [cdphillips@wesleyan.edu](mailto:cdphillips@wesleyan.edu), [szinser@wesleyan.edu](mailto:szinser@wesleyan.edu)





Bhutanese and Burmese refugees now resettled in Charlotte, North Carolina attend a cultural awareness class with volunteer teachers. [Photo: Sebastian Rich]



Three volunteers work on a field mapping project sponsored by Humanitarian OpenStreetMap in Indonesia.




Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration Catherine Wiesner visiting with South Sudanese refugee children at a child-friendly space in Kule Refugee Camp in Gambella, Ethiopia. [Photo: State Department]

**2. Partnering with university officials.** U.S. universities are supporting refugees around the world and here at home through a variety of partnerships and programs. Students are working with professors, university administrators, and international admissions offices to help refugees through scholarship opportunities, online courses, and partnerships with local resettlement agencies. For more information on how your university can help, check out the next section: [6 Ways Universities Are Helping Refugees.](#)











**3. Spreading the word.** Students are raising awareness on campus and in their communities about the global refugee crisis and the United States' history of refugee resettlement. The [Refugee Myths and Facts Guide](#) found in the [Want to Learn More?](#) section provides facts and background information on the refugee crisis, as well as a short list of relevant documentaries universities have recently screened. Here are some examples of university efforts to spread the word:

- ◆ **Columbia University's** [Op-Ed in the Columbia Spectator](#)
- ◆ **University of Michigan Law School** [International Refugee Assistance Program \(IRAP\)](#) chapter's [Op-Ed in the Detroit News.](#)
- ◆ **No Lost Generation** [George Washington University's panel with international non-governmental organizations on Syrian refugees.](#)
- ◆ **Wesleyan University's** series of [awareness panels](#) focusing on the Syrian

refugee crisis. Topics include: The Development of the Crisis and the Response in Europe, The Refugee Experience, and The U.S. Response, Locally and Nationally.

- ◆ **University of Alabama's** [Refugee Awareness Week](#), featuring a [documentary screening](#), a student mural project, and an expert panel event available to the public. Contact: [methoman@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:methoman@crimson.ua.edu)
- ◆ **The University of Montana School of Journalism's** project to report on the refugee crisis, [Missoula to Berlin](#). Contact: [Henriette.Lowisch@umontana.edu](mailto:Henriette.Lowisch@umontana.edu) 

**4. Joining the social media conversation.** The following feeds and hashtags represent just a small sample of how the public is engaging on the refugee crisis:

- ◆ Hashtags:
  - #RefugeesWelcome
  - #AidRefugees
  - #One4campaign
  - #SafePassage
- ◆ Official Feeds:
  - U.S. Department of State    
  - U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration  
  - U.S. Agency for International Development Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance   
  - U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power 

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)   
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)   
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)   
- InterAction  

◆ Other public advocates:

- [UN Goodwill Ambassadors](#)
- [Huffington Post's list of top Instagram feeds on refugees](#)

**5. Supporting charities that help refugees.** There are a wide range of charities, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and UN bodies providing support and humanitarian assistance to refugees around the world. Student groups have supported their efforts through:

- ◆ Traditional fundraising, like [Adelphi University's fundraiser](#)
- ◆ Use of crowdsourcing platforms, like [Wesleyan Refugee Project's Crowdrise campaign](#)
- ◆ Other creative fundraising efforts, like [Columbia University's charity concert featuring Syrian-American musician/composer Malek Jandali](#)
- ◆ The [Syrian Student Union](#) at The Ohio State University's [Buckeyes for Syria](#) project, which sells craft items celebrating both Syria and Ohio to raise money for Syrian refugees in need. Contact: [syrianstudentunion@gmail.com](mailto:syrianstudentunion@gmail.com)

If you are interested in community fundraising, the following links could help you decide where to direct your contributions:

- ◆ [www.aidrefugees.gov](http://www.aidrefugees.gov)
- ◆ [www.cidi.org/disaster-responses/syria/](http://www.cidi.org/disaster-responses/syria/)
- ◆ [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

**6. Supporting local refugee resettlement partners.** Many universities already partner with local agencies that resettle refugees. Some universities offer classes, facilities, and services. Others organize student volunteers to provide services from house painting, to interpretation and legal services. Here are some examples:



**Fundraising Event for Syrian Refugees**

International Student Society, in conjunction with the United Nation Refugee Agency, will be having a fundraising table in support of Syrian Refugees

Refugee crisis: Food is distributed to migrants in Hungary <REUTERS/Leonhard Foeger>

**Oct. 13 - Oct. 16  
12PM - 2PM**

If you have any questions, please contact us at: [iss@adelphi.edu](mailto:iss@adelphi.edu)

**UC Lobby**

Poster advertising Adelphi University's fundraiser to support UNHCR

- ◆ [Davidson College Refugee Support](#) is a student-led community relations group devoted to assisting refugees in North Carolina with health and life skills, higher education, and general career advancement. Their work includes English tutoring, fundraising, community event planning, and working with college administrators to provide admissions assistance to refugees. Contact: [ajinaddaff@davidson.edu](mailto:ajinaddaff@ davidson.edu), [ammadan@davidson.edu](mailto:ammadan@davidson.edu)
- ◆ [Wesleyan Refugee Project](#) partners with Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services in New Haven, organizing student volunteers to help refugees apply for energy and housing subsidies. Contact: [cdphillips@wesleyan.edu](mailto:cdphillips@wesleyan.edu), [cksmith@wesleyan.edu](mailto:cksmith@wesleyan.edu), [szinser@wesleyan.edu](mailto:szinser@wesleyan.edu)

You can find additional examples of [resettlement support](#) under [6 Ways Universities Are Helping Refugees](#).



A 13-year-old Iraqi being taught the history of the American flag by staff of Catholic Charities in Louisville, Kentucky. [Photo: Sebastian Rich]



University of Montana student Shannon O'Hara (left) greets fellow students at a film screening hosted by Missoula-to-Berlin, a study abroad program organized by the University of Montana School of Journalism.

## 6 Ways Universities Are Helping Refugees

**1. Offering scholarships to refugees.** Refugees face a number of obstacles in pursuing higher education, including finding a way to pay for college or training. An offer of free or reduced tuition sometimes means the difference between refugees working low-skill jobs or aspiring to careers. Refugees resettled in the United States are well-placed to take advantage of scholarships. Universities can contact [local resettlement agencies](#) to notify them about scholarship programs available to refugees. Universities are also helping refugees by:

- ◆ **Joining the IIE Syria Consortium**, a group of universities from around the world offering scholarships for Syrian students. With support from the U.S. Department of State and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Syria Consortium has provided more than \$4.5 million in assistance to Syrian students. This includes scholarships at Syria Consortium institutions, free on-line test prep courses, and institutional top-up grants. Contact: [SyriaSupport@iie.org](mailto:SyriaSupport@iie.org)
- ◆ **Helping refugees take advantage of financial aid opportunities.** Resettled refugees are eligible for federal financial aid via FAFSA just like other domestic students; however, they often need guidance to take advantage of these resources.

**2. Providing flexibility in admissions and credentialing guidelines.** Refugee or displaced students might not have access to transcripts or letters of recommendation reflecting earlier studies, or they might not meet English language proficiency requirements. Flexibility in admissions and credentialing guidelines often goes a long way towards making higher education accessible to qualified refugee candidates. Existing English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs can help otherwise competitive students. Several universities are now administering placement tests, using standardized tests in lieu of documents, or allowing students to audit courses to determine proper placement. Additional resources:

- ◆ **The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)** hosts a [multi-part series of webinars](#) on the Syrian refugee crisis, which provides information on best practices and guidance for U.S. institutions.
- ◆ **The University of California, Davis** has outlined additional options in their paper "Principles and Best Practices to Protect and Support Displaced and Refugee Students in American Higher Education," which they will make public in 2016.

**3. Providing free online courses for credit.** Allowing refugees to take courses online can help them work towards their degrees, even if they are unable to travel or gain entry into the United States. Examples include:



- Making existing online courses available to refugees for free;
- Offering advanced standing to refugees who complete MOOCs offered on platforms such as [Coursera](#), [EdX](#), or [Udacity](#).

**4. Supporting local resettlement agencies.** Many colleges and universities support local resettlement centers through free or discounted tuition for refugees, use of university facilities including gyms and meeting rooms, and access to university services including mental health services. Universities also organize student volunteers to assist with translation and interpretation, pro bono legal services, English tutoring, and logistics support. Partnerships frequently begin with universities reaching out to local resettlement centers to ask what kind of assistance they need. Universities can find their local resettlement center using this [list](#) or the interactive map found at [www.AidRefugees.gov](http://www.AidRefugees.gov). Most centers have volunteer coordinators who help guide efforts and contributions. Here are some examples of existing partnerships:

- Inspired by the Pope's call on every parish to host one refugee family,



University of Montana journalism professor Henriette Lowisch takes a question during a community film screening on refugees organized by Missoula-to-Berlin, a study abroad program dedicated to reporting on the refugee issue [Photo: Adam McCaw]

**Guilford College's "Every Campus a Refuge"** program is supporting local refugee resettlement agencies by drawing on the College's material and human resources to offer refugees the use of campus facilities and assistance in resettlement. Guilford students, faculty, and staff volunteers are trained by their partner resettlement agency to assist as requested. The partnership also connects refugees to educational and employment opportunities, and provides a welcoming environment that facilitates cultural, social and emotional adjustment. More information on the partnership [here](#). Contact: [abdod@guilford.edu](mailto:abdod@guilford.edu) or [knightjs@guilford.edu](mailto:knightjs@guilford.edu)

- **Erie Community College's** partnership with Journey's End Refugee Services called [Making a Connection](#) offers high school equivalency courses to adult refugees to pave the way towards higher education. Contact: [farrell@ecc.edu](mailto:farrell@ecc.edu)

**5. Facilitating student engagement.** University administrators are playing a key role in creating campus environments conducive to meaningful engagement. Some examples include:



- **The George Washington University (GWU)** has officially recognized [No Lost Generation](#) (NLG), a student group dedicated to awareness raising and fundraising for Syrian refugee education. The group's official status allows them to receive university funding to support their efforts, and may soon allow students to receive credit for their work. In addition, multiple programs at GWU are working to implement the activities of NLG in coursework, officially adopting programs as part of a larger curriculum. This includes a grant by the GWU Institute of Middle East Studies to use online Arabic tutoring services run by refugees. Contact: [nolostgenerationgw@gmail.com](mailto:nolostgenerationgw@gmail.com)
- **Wesleyan University's president** publicly endorsed student engagement and programming on refugees, and asked faculty to partner with student group [Wesleyan Refugee Project](#) to create a university action plan. He shared [a progress report](#) on his official blog.

**6. Fostering productive campus dialogue.** College campuses are important hubs for community dialogue and are serving as conduits for public education. Events organized on campuses are bringing together faculty, students, and other members of the community for education, discussion, and mobilization. Some examples include:

- **The University of Washington's Pipeline Project** offers courses that pair instruction on current refugee crises with volunteer work for local refugee communities. One of their current offerings, [Immigrant and Refugee Communities](#), consists of classroom lectures and chances for reflection on UW students' experiences tutoring local refugee students in the community.

- ✦ **Bowdoin College's event [What Matters: A Global Conversation at Bowdoin About Syrian Refugees](#)**, a discussion with faculty, staff, students, and community members on the millions fleeing violence in Syria. The public event was part of a discussion series organized by the McKeen Center for the Common Good, which invites faculty, staff, students, and other local experts to hold informal talks on campus about current events and issues of concern as they come up in the world. Contact: [mvazquez@bowdoin.edu](mailto:mvazquez@bowdoin.edu), [sseames@bowdoin.edu](mailto:sseames@bowdoin.edu)
- ✦ The **[University of Colorado at Boulder's Dialogue Program](#)** brought together diverse groups of students, staff, and faculty to [explore refugee integration issues](#) through honest communication. Contact: [dialogues@colorado.edu](mailto:dialogues@colorado.edu).

## Want To Learn More?

- ✦ **[Refugee Myths and Facts Guide](#)**
- ✦ **[EducationUSA Virtual Advising Center](#)**: The dedicated Educational Adviser provides guidance to Syrian students still in Syria and refugees abroad, through social media and virtual platforms including email, Skype, Twitter, Facebook, and Google+. In addition to advising Syrians, EducationUSA Syria also regularly informs colleges and universities, NGOs and organizations in the United States on Syrian credentials, and admissions challenges facing Syrian students. Contact: [educationusa.syria@gmail.com](mailto:educationusa.syria@gmail.com)  
- ✦ **[Information and resources](#)** on working with Syrian refugees and other communities
- ✦ **[President Obama's Call to Aid Refugees](#)**
- ✦ Documentary films recently screened on campuses:
  - [Clouds Over Sidra, Documentary](#)
  - [Salam, Neighbor, Documentary](#)
  - [A Requiem for Syrian Refugees](#)
- ✦ Further reading:
  - **[The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community](#)** by Mary Pipher is a primer on refugee integration in the United States.
  - **[Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees](#)** is a non-profit, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, bilingual journal. It publishes analytical, reflective, and probing articles from a wide range of disciplinary and regional perspectives, presenting writing of academics, policy-makers, and

practitioners in the field of forced migration.

- **[Forced Migration Review](#)** is published by the Refugee Studies Centre at University of the University of Oxford. Through FMR, authors from around the world analyze the causes and impacts of displacement, debate policies and programs, share research findings, reflect the lived experience of displacement, and present examples of good practice and recommendations for policy and action.

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