

**The Inter-University Forced Migration Conference at the Fletcher School  
From Flight to Freedom?: Tracing the Path of Displacement**

*Friday, February 11th, 2005*

*2:00-3:45 Livelihoods Panel*

*ASEAN Auditorium*

*“Surviving or Thriving? The Challenging Pursuit of a Sustainable Livelihood”*

*Conference Commencement:*

Marty Schmith, the Forced Migration Conference Coordinator, commenced the Forced Migration Conference by extending a warm welcome to the Livelihoods panelists and to the audience. She noted that the Forced Migration Conference had been organized as a student initiative based on an idea that had developed over a year ago. She emphasized that the vision of the conference was to create a space for academics, students, community members, international organizations, non-profit organizations, government officials, and representatives of refugees to come together to create synergies and increase collaboration. She pointed out that a priority in organizing the conference was to ensure that there was a refugee voice on every panel. She highlighted the theme of the conference, “From Flight to Freedom?” and noted how it had been posed more as a question rather than as a fact. This feature was to encourage conference participants to contemplate the complexities of the path of displacement and the many obstacles that exist for forced migrants to acquire freedom. The goal of the conference is to seek improvements in policy and research by envisioning forced migration as a process of both short-term and long-term challenges and solutions. She noted that while the theme of Human Rights is not a theme addressed specifically by any one panel, the theme is nevertheless present in each of the different panels, through such aspects as economic and social rights as well as the theme of identity. Finally, Marty Schmith drew attention to the Forced Migration Conference Program and noted the various events that would be taking place over the weekend as part of the conference.

*Livelihoods Panel:*

*“Surviving or Thriving? The Challenging Pursuit of a Sustainable Livelihood”*

*Introduction:*

Dr. Karen Jacobson, Director of the Refugees and Forced Migration Program, a joint program of the Fletcher School and the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University, extended a warm welcome to the Livelihood panelists and to the audience. Dr. Jacobson emphasized that the ability for refugees and the forced migrant population to support themselves and their families was a prime concern. She noted that forced migrants face many challenges in finding work and securing an income. One of such challenges to finding work~~ing~~ and securing an income is that human rights, such as the right to work or the right to free movement, is often missing from the countries in which forced migrants resettle. Next, Dr. Jacobson noted that refugees face the obstacle of creating and adapting strategies to meet the new environment in which they find themselves, such as in refugee camps, host communities, urban areas, or rural areas. She

emphasized the need for international organizations, aid agencies, donors and advocacy centers to support livelihoods. She raised such issues as: the consequences of forced migrants for the host economy and; the issue of citizenship, as well as the type of interventions needed to support livelihoods. She anticipated that the Livelihood Panel would shed~~throw~~ light on these matters.

Dr. Jacobson introduced the Livelihood panelists:

- *His Excellency Leonard Ngaithe*, from the Embassy of the Republic of Kenya to the United States, has served as the Ambassador of Kenya to the United States since July of 2004. Previously, Ambassador Ngaithe served as Kenya's ambassador to the Netherlands with accreditation to the Czech Republic (2000-2004) and as acting high commissioner in London (1999-2000).
- Charles Setchell, ~~who is~~ from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of ~~the~~ USAID has had over twenty five years of experience in urban housing and environmental management in the developing world.
- Dr. Cindy Horst, ~~is~~ from the Amsterdam Research Institute for Global Issues and Development Studies at the University of Amsterdam ~~and~~ has conducted extensive fieldwork in refugee camps in Kenya as well as in Minneapolis. She has written a book entitled, "Transnational Nomads: How Somalis cope with refugee life in the Dadaab camps of Kenya."
- Mr. Quang Nguyen, from the International Institute of Boston, was a refugee from Vietnam who came to the United States in the 1980s.

*Ambassador Leonard Ngaithe  
Embassy of the Republic of Kenya*

Introduction:

- Migration is not a new phenomenon but is in fact as old as humanity itself.
- Whether or not "forced migration" can be considered a new phenomenon is debatable however
- Forced migrants fall under the category of refugees in Kenya
- There are very few internally displaced people as a result of the country having been peaceful over the past few years.
- There are approximately 230,000 refugees in Kenya from neighboring countries such as Uganda, Sudan, Somalia, and Mozambique.
- Migrants arrive in Kenya primarily when conflict erupts in their home countries.
- Of this number of refugees, approximately 150,000 are from Somalia, 160,000 from Sudan, and others from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda.
- There could in fact be many more refugees in Kenya who are unaccounted for as a result of the fact that many refugees do not wish to register
- While Kenya is a signatory to the international agreements on refugee protection, there is also currently a bill pending in Kenya's Parliament that would give certain legal rights and protection to refugees if enacted

- ~~There are many agencies in Kenya that the government has allowed to be to managers from managing these migrants~~
- Among the agencies present in Kenya include the World Federation, the World Food Program, the International Rescue Committee, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- Within Kenya there are four principal refugee camps
- Of these camps, one major camp is called Kakuma in Turkana in northern Kenya, which hosts refugees primarily from Ethiopia and Sudan
- Another major camp is Dadaab in eastern Kenya, consisting of mostly people from Somalia
- The migrants in Kenya are ~~therein Kenya~~ on a temporary basis only, and have the intent to return home
- The spaces provided in Kenya are therefore temporary, with no permanent bases available in Kenya
- Although the government tries to do all that it can, there is limited accommodation in Kenya, largely as a result of a lack of resources

Challenges to the care of the migrant population in Kenya:

1. Administration
  - More attention is needed with regards to new arrivals
  - One concern is overcoming the tendency of people not wanting to register
  - Registration is important, however it is difficult for a number of reasons. ~~For example, one of which is that~~ people must be identified in order ~~to that they may~~ be placed appropriately in ~~at the~~ camp so as not to exacerbate conflicts between clashing clans
  - Another concern is the challenge of warehousing, which includes such issues as the lack of adequate amount of space and facilities, as well as a lack of resources such as water and electricity to meet the needs of the migrant population
  - Furthermore there are challenges to the distribution of food, with food shortages and malnourishment a problem in Kenya
2. Water and sanitation
  - Improvements are needed in water and sanitation
3. Education and Training
  - Free education is available to all
  - Kenya faces the challenge of sustaining these people as well as meeting the needs of its own people
3. Tensions between nationals and refugees as well as tensions between tribes/ethnic communities in camps
4. Environmental degradation
5. Meeting the right of refugees to work
  - Free education up to university is provided by the government
  - Those with skills are allowed to leave the camp during the day and return at night
  - Refugees compete for jobs with the Kenyans creating an employment problem

- Those that can work, do work
- It is easy for Kenya to absorb high-skilled workers
- The majority of migrants however tend to be low-skilled
- Mobility of migrants in the labor market will depend on their skills and education
- Those that came with money find it easier to settle as they are able to do business in such areas as transportation, warehousing, or at kiosks in the camp itself
- Those with skills often can provide their skills in the camp or in the surrounding neighborhoods
- Agencies try to help by providing basic tools so that refugees can survive
- Some of the ladies are engaged in income generation projects/capacity building projects such as making garments or baskets. They sell these goods either between themselves or outside the camp, allowing for them to survive on their own
- Men can serve as artisans, mechanics, or electricians
- The youth stay busy by engaging in such as activities as playing soccer or writing poetry
- Another form of survival is through agriculture. Refugees are encouraged to grow crops around the camp, though it may be difficult in areas with poor soil quality or in urban areas like Nairobi or Mombassa. The crops are then either eaten or sold.

#### 6. Child abuse, gender related violence, and crime

Balancing the needs of the Kenyans with the needs of refugees in Kenya:

- Balancing the needs of Kenyans with the needs of refugees is not easy as Kenya is a developing country with its own financial + economic problems
- Kenya feels a moral obligation however to help and is doing as much it can to help these people
- Refugees have been hosted by Kenya since as long as it has been an independent country, thanks to Kenya being a free and secure country
- Kenya is grateful for the efforts of the international community
- Kenya appeals for further assistance and funding by the international community in order to help meet the needs of refugees in Kenya

Kenya and the peace process with Sudan and Somalia:

- Kenya has been engaged in peace overtures with Sudan and Somalia
- This is one method to reduce the flows of refugees to Kenya from these two countries
- A peace treaty in Southern Sudan was signed recently and Ngaithe hopes that the two sides will implement what they signed
- There is still however the problem of Darfur
- The transitional government of Somalia is trying to return from Nairobi to Somali
- Much assistance is still needed from the United Nations and the African Union
- Legitimacy of the transitional government of Somalia is vital
- With peace in Somalia, Somali refugees in Kenya will go back home

Conclusion:

- Kenya is honored to host these people
- Kenya anticipates that once the situation improves for refugees in their home countries, they will return home
- Kenya however is not pushing the refugees to return home. Rather, they are encouraged to return home only when it is safe to do so

*Mr. Charles Setchell:  
Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance/USAID*

Livelihood Promotion:

- Livelihood promotion is becoming an increasingly important feature of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance's mandate
- The OFDA mandate: Save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce economic impacts of disaster
- Emphasis is placed on the OFDA's "third phrase"
- Opportunities have been missed in the past to promote livelihoods
- OFDA is therefore investigating ways to access labor markets and resources and to promote livelihoods in displaced communities

Where is Livelihood Promotion Applied?

- Settlements, the "where" of OFDA's mandate
- Encourage work in places where people are living, such as transit centers, villages, and mega cities
- One of the features of the settlement program is to provide a framework for looking at issues like livelihoods
- Multi-sectoral, reflecting multi-faceted character of context (settlements)
- Opportunistic with regard to livelihood promotion
- Cognizant of gender, the environment, and local organizations and social relations
- Transitional
- Accountable to local governance structures

Livelihoods:

- The future is URBAN
- Global pop will increase from 6 billion to 8.3 billion during the next 25 years; 95% will be located in the cities of developing countries
- Livelihoods have been cast as a largely rural/agricultural phenomenon—this is not the case

The Economic Impacts of Shelters:

- An econometric study of shelters around the world was just completed
- Study shows that the impacts of livelihood generation is much greater than expected

#### Remittances:

- Ex patriot communities currently send home 93 billion dollars per year
- 50% of the money is spent on housing and housing repairs (livelihood magnet)
- Counter cyclical: money flows increase after disasters and conflict to support affected friends and family
- Humanitarian community does not know enough about these flows
- Remittances could be used to support hazard and conflict mitigation

#### New Technologies and Opportunities for Livelihood Promotion:

- New technologies such as solar power lighting and fuel-efficient stoves are available to promote livelihood generation (directly and indirectly)
- These technologies are related to human security/protection issues
- In Darfur for example, where there is high incidence of rape connected with the accumulation of fuel wood by women, any way to lower the risk with new technologies is crucial
- Vector Control
- Safety (Fire Hazard)
- Facility use rates
- Logistic saving rates
- Add value by linking livelihoods with hazard mitigation, public health, environmental management and D+G
- Through better water management ~~the~~ OFDA has seen reductions in malaria and water borne disease
- 1 in 4 households live in an earthen structure in an earthquake prone area
- 1.5 billion are at risk
- Promote new construction with shelter as a means of livelihood promotion
- Hazard mitigation and environmental management are huge markets for livelihood promotion
- Debt and hazard: link the two in order to reduce vulnerability and generate livelihoods

#### Key Points:

- OFDA will place emphasis on the “third phrase”
- Emphasis on livelihood generation
- Livelihood is not just rural, agriculture or low-end
- Shelter activities are livelihood magnets
- Livelihood opportunities abound in new strategies, tools, and products

*Dr. Cindy Horst*

*Amsterdam Research Institute for Global Issues and Development Studies, University of Amsterdam*

#### Refugee Livelihood Strategies:

- Refugee livelihood strategies towards self-sufficiency are based on previously developed capacities and skills

- Strategies are derived from existing social structures and concepts of identities
- Strategies are based on history, on previous ways of surviving
- Strong social networks exist within the Somali community based on kinship, neighbors, women groups, etc.
- Somalis disperse investments in different areas and among different people and activities in order to reduce risk

#### Obstacles:

- Policies however often ignores these capacities or have insufficient knowledge about them
- This leads to frustration among the refugees who are expected to live in camps and to live on handouts
- While work permits are promised, often camps do not have work permits
- As a result, many move into the informal sector
- The locations of refugee camps are problematic as often camps are difficult to access or are located in economically marginal areas
- Refugees find it difficult to make a life especially if they are accustomed to surviving on natural resources that may be scarce in the camp
- Women who go out for firewood encounter a very insecure environment and may be targets of rape

#### Consequences:

- Refugees take the initiative to improve their livelihoods, often against policies
- Refugees make different choices than what is expected or allowed by governments
- They may go into urban centers despite being expected to remain in the camp
- Urban centers allow them to be invisible and provide far more opportunities and services that are not available in the camp
- Choices that refugees make often make sense
- What is behind the choices made by refugees is not however really understood
- There is a strong need therefore to understand refugee decisions
- In the end, livelihood is still marginal and dangerous

#### Remittances:

- Livelihood strategies are often transnational, a fact that needs to be more recognized in research and in policy and practice
- The link between the urban areas and the camps must also be recognized
- 15% of refugees in camp receive a regular remittance which allows for survival despite limited international aid and economic opportunities
- Remittances are therefore very important to refugees in the region
- Those who have already resettled may find their life very difficult as they may be caring for others financially through remittances
- Those who are taking care of others through remittances may find their options limited or face a financial burden as a result of having to send remittances

#### Recommendations:

1. Attempts to assist refugees rebuild sustainable livelihoods can be based on:
  - Acknowledging and improving capacities and potential of refugees
  - Reducing constraints (general and specific ones)
  - Addressing marginal groups, “the vulnerable” that are in refugee societies and ensure that they are the ones receiving assistance, rather than just those with the most financing who often profit from these programs
  - Looking at individual characteristics of people: social networks, level of mobility, educational level and language skills
  - Providing more access to micro credit and banking facilities as a way for refugees to engage in business
  - Providing more education and language opportunities
  - Improving legal status and rights
  - Exploring and building on existing transnational networks and livelihood strategies of refugees. (ex. Remittances)

Conclusion:

- Far more knowledge is needed on livelihood and constraints refugees are facing
- The best way of developing policies for forced migrants is to include the voices of forced migrants in policy planning and decisions.

*Quang Nguyen*  
*International Institute of Boston*

Introduction:

- As a former refugee, Mr. Nguyen offers his own experiences to the Livelihoods Panel
- His emphasis is on the fact that livelihoods do have a direct linkage to freedom
- People move to the United States because they face crisis and fear and look at the United States as the land of hope, opportunities, and freedom

Forced Migrants and Livelihoods in the USA:

- Forced migrants have various needs in the different stages of displacement: Flight from home, Transit through a 2<sup>nd</sup> country, Settlement in camps or other villages/urban settings, Resettlement in third countries or repatriation
- There are many different immigration categories: refugees and asylees; asylum seekers; other groups: Amerasians, Haitian/Cuban Entrants, Victims of Trafficking
- Comprehensive Refugee Employment Services provides for family self-sufficiency and the opportunity to move up
- All of the immigration categories listed above are eligible for Comprehensive Refugee Employment Services for five years or until income is 450% above federal poverty guidelines

Linkages That Exist Along Refugees Path of Displacement:

- UNHCR and other international organizations

- Within the US government system: Federal, state, city and other interdepartmental communications
- Within the refugee service providers network
- Within the forced migrant communities: Community Mutual Assistance Associations
- Other mainstream service providers: Adult Basic Education, Vocational Skills Training, One Stop Career Centers, and Community Colleges
- The obstacle is creating an effective system that links all of these institutions together

#### General Profile of Forced Migrants Served by the International Institute of Boston

##### Employment and Training Department:

- Ethnic Groups: African (40%), Asian (30%), Hispanic (15%), Eastern Europe (15%)
- From 42 different countries of origin
- No formal education/illiterate-15%
- Less than High school education 30%
- High school diplomat/and or/some college: 40%
- Undergraduate degree: 4%
- Graduate Degree: 1%
- Post Graduate Degree: 1%

#### Different Stages in Securing Sustainable Livelihood:

##### 1. From Survival to Successful Adaptation:

- Deal with resettlement issues
- Improve knowledge and participate in first step training (ESOL, ABE, Skills Training)
- Obtain first employment and other subsequent entry-level jobs

##### 2. Through successful integration people can move on to achieve:

- Continue in higher education and training
- Obtain higher-level jobs
- Achieve durable economic self-sufficiency
- Build a financial asset from home ownership
- Reclaim their identification and social values

#### Challenges in finding employment:

- Language abilities in speaking and writing
- Lack of transferable skills for employment
- Education level/academic achievement and recognized credentials
- Knowledge of US work environment
- Other: family, social, cultural, and religious issues

#### Challenges in maintaining and developing new job skills:

- Lack of vocational training opportunities for people with limited English skills or without high school credentials
- Lack of training or career advancement opportunities at work
- Lack of monetary resources to support their advanced education
- Conflicts of time due to personal or family issues
- Conflicts of interest due to cultural or religious obligations
- Different pace of learning due to background, personal interest and health condition

Challenges in securing sustainable livelihood and achieving self-sufficiency:

- Social and cultural differences
- Low paying jobs, seasonal jobs, or only part-time employment
- Large size family with many dependants and only one source of income
- High living costs in [Massachusetts](#)
- Lack of opportunities for affordable housing
- Knowledge of budgeting or planning for long-term budget

Available Services that Lead to Sustainable Livelihood:

- ESOL basic and higher education
- Technical training and placement
- Case management
- Cash and medical assistance
- Career counseling
- Funding Sources: Federal, State, City, Government, Private foundations, corporations
- Roles of each organization/service provider: direct services and advocacy—for fair and good public policy

International Institute of Boston's Services:

- ESOL, ABE, English for Employment
- Work Orientation Workshops
- Basic Computer Workshops
- Hospitality Training Program
- Hotel career advancement Program
- Refugee resettlement
- Legal immigration and citizenship services
- Volunteer services

International Institute of Boston's Employment Program Outcomes:

- 600 clients per year
- Job placement: 85% of program Graduates
- Hotel industry 30%
- Retail Industry 20%
- Hospital/health care: 20%
- Banking 10%
- Construction 10%

- Small manufacturing 10%
- Average wage: 10 dollars an hour
- Job opportunities with health benefits: 70% of job placements
- The IIB works with a network of over 500 employers in Boston

Challenges to Community Based Organizations:

- Not enough funding for basic vocational training and placement services
- Lack of funding opportunities for long-term training and career advancement
- Role of community based organizations are not visible or equally recognized as the One- Stop Career Centers or other state/community colleges
- Gap between skills of forced migrants and employers' requirements
- Security concerns restrict employment and education opportunities for people in many fields
- Downturn of the economy—less job opportunities for people
- Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination

*Question and Answer:*

Question 1: The first question addressed the way in which Kenya views its refugee population as a temporary population. It was noted that due to continued conflict in countries surrounding Kenya, there would inevitably be refugees in Kenya for many years to come. The question therefore sought an explanation from Ambassador Ngaithe about the way in which Kenya viewed its refugee population as temporary and sought suggestions from Ambassador Ngaithe of how refugees would be able to earn a livelihood in Kenya.

Answer 1: Ambassador Ngaithe answered the question by highlighting that there is not a policy of permanency of refugees in Kenya. Instead, Kenya primarily seeks to ensure that there is peace and harmony in the countries where refugees come from, as Kenya views that the refugees are in Kenya due to problems as home. Therefore, Kenya anticipates that the refugees will go home when their home is safe.

Question 2: The second question addressed Dr. Cindy Horst's discussion about using micro finance and banking as tools to promote livelihoods based on existing capacities. The question sought an explanation about how micro finance and banking would develop such capacities.

Answer 2: Dr. Cindy Horst answered the question by addressing the Somali population in particular. She noted that as Somalia does not have an adequate formal banking system, there is little way for the population to gain access to funds for projects. It would therefore make a significant difference if the Somali population had access to money as a means to put this money to work. So far the steps towards this type of micro finance and banking are minimal, though banks and investors are becoming more and more interested in projects that fund small businesses.

Question 3: The third question was geared toward Cindy Horst and sought to know how the Somali population was affected by the cuts of money transfers after September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Answer 3: Cindy Horst noted that the short-term effects were tremendous with a loss of huge amounts of money. She noted however that the long-term effects were not as dramatic as one might expect.

Question 4A: How can relief be more preventive rather than reactionary?

Answer 4A: Ambassador Ngaithe mentioned that particularly in Africa, much could have been done on the preventative side of things, perhaps in the form of an early warning system. He emphasized however that preemption is a challenge for both governments as well as the international community.

Question 4B: Should relief organizations be neutral? Do relief organizations have the right to become political or should they keep hands out of politics?

Answer Question 4B: Charles Setchell addressed this answer by noting that conflict mitigation and management go hand and hand with relief and support.

Question 5: Can we have a system where the local community decides where and how reconstruction is carried out?

Answer 5: Charles Setchell answered this question by highlighting the case of Indonesia, where both the military and the civil government are at play in areas affected by the tsunami. Mr. Setchell pointed out how the government of Indonesia does not control the military presence in the Aceh province. He then mentioned that it is certainly a concern of many in Indonesia how plans conceived in Jakarta will meet the needs of community-based initiatives. He noted that there are significant numbers within policy circles in Indonesia who encourage community-based input. He emphasized however that it would take some time to develop the local capacity to articulate these concerns. He highlighted the barrack camp structure in Indonesia for example, and noted how the international community has also been very slow to react. He pointed out that there is currently a needs assessment of shelters being undertaken to address the priorities and needs at the local level.

Question 6: What are some of the tensions that exist towards resettled refugees in the United States? How can the local population become aware of the issues that refugees and asylees face?

Answer 6: Mr. Quang Nguyen noted that after arriving to the United States, refugees rely heavily on the resettlement program to find housing. Many do not have the language skills or the knowledge to fit into their neighborhoods. He highlighted that local people tend to lack knowledge about refugees and asylees and may even foster feelings of fear about them. Local people often ask questions such as “Why do we bring strangers here?” and state such things as, “They take away our jobs!” Local people however do not tend to

recognize that there are many jobs that local people do not want to take. The tension that exists is a conflict largely based on language, cultural and social issues. This is an issue that the resettlement program as well as the local government and other entities should get involved with more. However, it is certainly a challenge for the resettlement program and the local government to create awareness.

Question 7: What is the main objective for people after they leave their home country? |  
Is their objective primarily an economic strategy or is their objective to return home?

Answer 7: It is essential to identify the reasons why refugees left their country in the first place. Then, it is important to encourage refugees to go back to where they came from when it is safe from them to return. Governments should have a policy to help refugees return to their home countries but should also to have a policy that helps to facilitate things in their home country so that they can return. People will definitely want to go back as soon as things are better. One of the factors that influences people moving back is the safety net that exists for people who are returning.