



# THE JOURNAL OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

## EDITORIAL

### Special Issue on Law and Society CRN 11: Displaced Peoples

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The Journal of Internal Displacement (JID), established July 2009, is the only scholarly journal committed to all displacement concerns worldwide. Thanks to the generous voluntary contribution from the advisory board and editorial team - manuscript submission, peer-review and publication of the JID is **FREE OF CHARGE**. The JID does not charge authors to submit articles.

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This Special Issue of the Journal of Internal Displacement (JID) celebrates the creation of the Displaced Peoples Collaborative Research Network of the Law and Society Association (LSA). This development is a fresh and welcome platform for interdisciplinary collaboration on one of the most-timely yet under-studied research areas.

LSA brings together scholars from various disciplines who are “committed to social scientific, interpretive, and historical analyses of law across multiple social contexts.”<sup>3</sup> To facilitate connections among scholars across various disciplines and geographies, LSA encourages its members to form Collaborative Research Networks (CRNs). CRNs organize themed sessions for annual meetings and provide an opportunity for scholars to develop cross disciplinary, cross national and international projects.

The Displaced Peoples CRN welcomes scholars examining “the intersection of race, gender, power and privilege within the global migration polity of refugees and internally displaced persons.”<sup>4</sup> It defines “displaced peoples” to include those forced to migrate internally and internationally because of natural or man-made disasters.<sup>5</sup> The net is cast broadly by intention, to incorporate research on development-induced displacement, homeless people, trafficked persons, Indigenous / Native peoples, asylum seekers, refugees, and unaccompanied minors.

The Displaced Peoples CRN was first convened at the 2017 LSA Annual Meeting in Mexico City, 20-23 June. Inaugural presentations occurred in one roundtable panel and three paper sessions, featuring the work of 16 scholars in total. This Special Issue of JID includes a version of one of the papers presented at the CRN’s roundtable discussion, “Fatal Journeys of Displaced

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<sup>3</sup> Law and Society Association website, <<http://www.lawandsociety.org/commitments.html>>.

<sup>4</sup> Displaced Peoples CRN website, <<https://displacedpeoples.net>>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

African Migrants Crossing the Mediterranean: International and Regional Effort and Response,” by Veronica Fynn Bruey.

Consistent with the CRN’s focus, all four articles in this Special Issue examine to varying degrees the role of gender, power and privilege in the myriad reasons compelling displacement, as well as the consequences of displacement. Fynn Bruey’s contribution describes the breadth of events and conditions that trigger migration throughout the continent of Africa, concentrating largely on 18 countries from which the bulk of “displaced migrants” originate.<sup>6</sup> Some of these catalysts also played a role in the displacement discussed in the other three articles. Fynn Bruey addresses the limited and ineffective European Union efforts to protect African migrants risking their lives for the chance of safety and argues that the African Union is positioned to implement and enforce local and regional measures to promote migrants’ safety.

Two contributions bring attention to a more focused and personal level by examining the erosive psychological effects of displacement. Authors Josephine N. Musau, Maxwell Omondi, and Lincoln Khasakhala identify the pervasiveness of post-traumatic stress disorder among victims of post-election violence in their article on “The Prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Maai Mahiu Camp in Nakuru County, Kenya.” Keeping with a mental health focus, authors Shorena Sadzaglishvili and Stuart Scharf probe and compare the psychological states of three groups of IDPs in Georgia in their piece “Measuring IDPs’ Psycho-Emotional Responses to War.” Both papers point to enduring psychological stress and recognised mental disorders resulting from the trauma of violence and subsequent displacement, arguing for more resources and treatment.

The final article included in this Special Issue also brings to light the experiences of a specific group of displaced people, identifying the factors influencing displaced women who succeed in constructing livelihoods for themselves and their families. In her article, “Female Heads of Households in Sri Lanka – Making and Sustaining Livelihoods in Protracted Displacement,” Fazeeha Azmi closes this Special Issue by giving readers a glimpse into the tenacity of the human will to survive and thrive in the face of intractable adversity.

While these four pieces provide insights on different angles of the origins and consequences of displacement, as well as individual and collective responses to forced migration, they share at least five common themes.

First, the number of people around the globe who have been forcibly removed from their homes and land is unprecedented, but this phenomenon is not new. All four pieces implicitly remind readers that while the media in the western part of the globe has only relatively recently turned its attention to the plight of tens of millions of displaced people, the phenomenon of displacement has a long history.

Second, and very much overlapping with the first commonality, is the study in three of the articles of the impact of protracted displacement. Musau, et al.’s study of PTSD among Kenyans displaced by post-election violence indicates the prevalence of PTSD in resettlement villages in 2015, long after the 2007-8 post-election violence that caused the displacement and despite the relative political stability since achieved. Sadzaglishvili and Scharf include in their comparative study two groups who suffered displacement in the early 1990s during separatist fighting with the Georgian military. The group from South Ossetia was displaced a second time by the brief 2008 Russia – Georgia war, while the group from Abkhazia experienced no additional violence causing

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<sup>6</sup> Veronica Fynn Bruey, ‘Fatal Journeys of Displaced African Migrants Crossing the Mediterranean: International and Regional Effort and Response’, at page 47 (defining “displaced migrants” to include IDPs, refugees and migrants who “leave their places of habitual residence” regardless of the reason).

subsequent displacement. Responses from both these groups of long-displaced people reflected deleterious psycho-emotional impacts of their experiences. The Abkhazian group, however, exhibited more hopefulness and defensive strategies to contend with their trauma, likely because they were further removed from their experience of violence.<sup>7</sup> Azmi, in her study of Sri Lankan female heads of households, similarly finds that the farther removed from the initial strife, the greater the opportunity to achieve livelihood objectives.<sup>8</sup>

Third, these pieces collectively highlight the variety and breadth of the causes of forced displacement and other forms of migration. Fynn Bruey's pan-continental perspective points to causes including ethnic and ethnic-religious conflict, political violence, environmental degradation exacerbated by increasing population pressure, border conflicts and authoritarianism. The other three pieces point to political, geopolitical and ethno-political violence.

Fourth, each article addresses displacement, at least in part, through a gender lens. Fynn Bruey's concern with women and children reflects research finding that displaced women face greater risks than other affected populations.<sup>9</sup> Musau et al.'s review of PTSD literature recounts studies showing a gender difference, with the risk of suffering from PTSD "said to be higher among women."<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, their study found the prevalence of PTSD was comparable across genders in the population of post-election violence survivors they surveyed.<sup>11</sup> Sadzaglishvili and Scharf found gender differences in the three IDP groups they observed in Georgia. Women in the long-displaced group from Abkhazia showed more optimism than did their male counterparts, whereas women in the group of doubly-displaced IDPs and those from the most recently-displaced group presented more hopelessness than their male counterparts.<sup>12</sup> Azmi focuses exclusively on the idea of gendered livelihoods. She further incorporates gender in her analysis by identifying that the ability of female heads of households to secure livelihoods is influenced by whether women sought to challenge social norms constraining women's roles, and whether there was a male presence in their household.

Finally, together these articles point to significant opportunities for cross disciplinary research exploring, on a broad level, policy responses to the underlying causes of displacement and the security needs of both migrants in transit and those in temporary settlements, as well as interventions and programming on a more local level to foster the physical and mental wellbeing of displaced persons and augment survival strategies. The Displaced Peoples CRN celebrated by this Special Issue provides the necessary scaffolding to support such cross disciplinary research.

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<sup>7</sup> Sadzaglishvili and Scharf, 'Measuring IDPs' Psycho-Emotional Responses to War', at page 39.

<sup>8</sup> Fazeeha Azmi, 'Female Heads of Households in Sri Lanka – Making and Sustaining Livelihoods in Protracted Displacement', at page 14.

<sup>9</sup> Fynn Bruey, at page 47. See also, for example, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiye (2014) 'Gender and Forced Migration'. Pp 395-408, 389, in E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee & Forced Migration Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Masau, et al., 'The Prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Maai Mahiu Camp in Nakuru County, Kenya', at page 23.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, at page 26.

<sup>12</sup> Sadzaglishvili and Scharf, at page 41.