About the Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies

Introduction

The Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies aims to respond to contemporary challenges of conflict and climate induced displacement. We are driven by a transformative agenda that places social justice and human rights as core aspects of our work that will empower refugee voices and build local capacities. Through a commitment to multidisciplinary scholarship, the Centre is committed to bringing together academia, refugee communities, government, civil society, and the private sector to collaboratively work on meaningful and tangible projects on current and future forced displacement.

Welcome to the March 2023 newsletter from the Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies (CAPRS). These newsletters – produced on a half-yearly basis – are intended to update partners and supporters on our work, as well as showcase upcoming areas of focus. In addition, the newsletter provides updates on some of the existing research priorities, and other areas in which CAPRS has been involved.

As CAPRS continues to streamline our work and focus over the coming months and years, we look forward to sharing more exciting content and updates with you. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to the CAPRS team at caprs@auckland.ac.nz should you have any queries.
A message from the CAPRS Co-Directors

Furthering protection spaces nationally and regionally

As we firmly move into 2023, the region continues to see a tightening of protection spaces for refugees and forced migrants. Across the region such as in Myanmar and Afghanistan the humanitarian situation remains particularly bleak, and solutions seem almost out of reach. As CAPRS, we remain committed to our mission and vision, and are proud of what we have been able accomplish in a relatively short amount of time as a Centre.

Over the past six months, CAPRS has continued to advance and grow our work in New Zealand, in the region and beyond. In New Zealand, we have continued our work supporting the New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel, ensuring that a sustainable engagement model which ensures refugee community perspectives are reflected in the development of New Zealand refugee policy is established. Beyond our borders, we continue to engage in the promotion of inclusive higher education, as well as strengthening ties with refugee communities and civil society actors.

Our Non-Residential Fellowship Programme is also in full swing, with our second cohort of fellows nearing the completion of their policy projects. On 27-28 April, CAPRS in partnership with the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, are hosting a public Symposium titled “Meeting the 'Dual Imperative': Working towards solutions for displacement in the Asia Pacific through policy-oriented research”. The symposium will showcase research findings and policy recommendations of NRF and other scholars working on protection issues in the region and prompt discussion as to how this research can go beyond the realm of academia and engage in and influence policy and practice.

In partnership with Opening Universities for Refugees, and through the guidance of Gül, we have also continued to work closely with partners for the support of inclusive higher education, as well as supporting civil society organisations and refugee led groups. Our work with Times Higher Education (THE) has continued to mature, with recent collaboration in Edinburgh as part of the UK Refugee Forum. Moreover, our December 2022 Professional Development Short Course on Evidence Based Advocacy with the Afghan Diaspora, and the associated Toolkit has showcased our commitment to working directly with impacted communities for improved outcomes.

On a final note, we'd like to take this opportunity to announce that Gül İnanç has recently concluded her tenure as Co-Director at CAPRS. Gül has been instrumental to setting CAPRS Vision and taking the Centre from an idea to a reality. Thankfully, we are lucky to be retaining Gül as an Affiliated Scholar and look forward to continuing our close engagement for the months and years again. Thank you again Gül for your imagination, your passion, and your commitment to your work.

As always, we extend our sincere thanks to our affiliated scholars, external stakeholders, partners and staff for your contribution to our work and the refinement of our Vision. As we move into a new chapter in our development as a Faculty Research Centre, we will continue to prioritize working through partnership and capitalizing upon collective expertise, especially of persons with lived experience of displacement.

Gül İnanç & Jay Marlowe

on behalf of CAPRS Team
Overview

Over the past six months, our Non-Residential Fellows have been hard at work conceptualizing, transforming and drafting their policy projects under the guidance of their mentors. This work covers issues including forced returns, voluntary repatriation schemes, sexual and gender-based violence, as well as access to higher education.

To support our fellows through this journey, a range of professional development sessions have been provided. This includes an introduction to publishing opportunities by Simon Bates from Routledge, an overview of drafting policy documents by Suzanne Woodward from the Auckland Public Policy Institute, a session on practical application of research with former NRF Fellow Grant Mitchell, and a writing workshop with Dr. Helen Sword.

Abdullah Mohammadi
Abdullah received his Masters in Demography from the University of Tehran. His thesis, ‘The myth of return: Socio-economic reintegration and sustainable return among Afghans’, studied the experience of socio-economic reintegration among Afghan returnees from Iran and their future migration intentions. Following his studies, he has gained extensive field experience in Afghanistan, Iran, India, Indonesia, Sweden and Germany.

Dr. Jonathan Birtwell
Jonathan holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. His thesis explored the learner identities of students with refugee backgrounds in Malaysia as they approached the end of their secondary education and looked towards continuing their educational journeys. The PhD project adopted a participatory methodology that engaged youth in refugee learning centres in Kuala Lumpur in an exploration of their learning biographies and identities to further understand the sociological drivers behind access to education.

Fiona MacGregor
Fiona is an award-winning researcher and analyst specialising in gender, conflict and human rights. She has worked extensively on issues involving women and girls affected by armed conflict and forced displacement in Asia Pacific for over a decade. In 2022 she was awarded a Doctoral Scholarship on UN Goal 16 of Peace and Trust to become a PhD candidate at Durham Law School. Her research involves a feminist social-legal exploration of international law and policy relating to sexual and gender-based violence in large-scale displacement settings.

Rabia Salihi
Rabia is a Senior Researcher with the Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organisation where she researches and investigates human rights violations and international crimes under the Taliban regime. Rabia holds a master’s degree in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies from the University of Oxford and an MA in Development Studies: track in Governance, Migration and Diversity from the Erasmus University Rotterdam. Rabia’s MA thesis focused on the implementation of assisted and voluntary return and reintegration schemes in Afghanistan.

Fellows are expected to present their policy papers in late April 2023 at the CAPRS-Kaldor Academic Symposium (see more details below). Here fellows will present their findings and recommendations to key stakeholders. More details on the programme can be found at: www.auckland.ac.nz/en/education/research/research-centres-and-units/the-centre-for-asia-pacific-refugee-studies-/caprs-non-residential-fellowship.html
Spotlight Interview – Michelle Ferns
CAPRS Programme Manager

What has been your past engagement with refugees and forcibly displaced persons? How did you fall into this line of work?

My initial engagement was through an Advocacy and Government Relations internship with Amnesty International Aotearoa, which focussed on the detention of people seeking asylum in remand facilities. From here, I connected with the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) and subsequently joined the APPRN Secretariat as a volunteer for several months at their Bangkok office. This included working across all aspects of the APRRN network, from media and communications to member engagement, coordinating regional advocacy efforts, and supporting workshops and international delegations. My engagement continued to expand as I returned to Melbourne and joined the Refugee Council of Australia as a Project Manager for the International Policy and Community Engagement Team and Refugee Alternatives Conference Planner and Coordinator. At the same time, I worked as the Australian Coordinator for the End Child Detention Coalition as part of the Global Campaign to End Child Detention in collaboration with the International Detention Coalition.

Through these various roles and projects, I have been humbled by the opportunity to work alongside refugee leaders, advocates, community groups and refugee-led organisations (RLOs) to promote their leadership, representation and support access to key policy and decision-making forums.

You joined CAPRS in September 2021. What was your interest in joining the Centre?

Throughout my regional and global experience, I have maintained a strong link with my home in Aotearoa New Zealand and worked closely with partners on various projects to engage New Zealand's civil society and the government. This has included, where possible, highlighting and harnessing New Zealand's potential in the Asia Pacific to address the challenges of forced displacement by sharing resources and expertise and, importantly, effectively supporting regional partners.

So, it was exciting to see the launch of CAPRS and the expansion of the sector with the addition of an academic body with strong representation and regional connections. While COVID finally determined my return home to Aotearoa in 2020, I also saw this as an excellent opportunity to engage with a Centre whose work I was greatly interested in working with and contributing to.

One of your roles is to support the work of the New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel (NZRAP). Can you tell us about the significance of this?

The global momentum supporting meaningful refugee participation (MRP) has been building significantly over the past several years from the Global Compact on Refugees, the first-ever Global Refugee Summit and the subsequent establishment of the Global Refugee Forum. As such, the support and resourcing for an independent refugee-led mechanism that can engage both with and within the Government is a timely step for refugee policy in Aotearoa and is an encouraging signal of the Government's willingness to practically support MRP through the resourcing of this Panel. For CAPRS, collaboration with the NZRAP means helping to build a strong foundation for MRP in Aotearoa while broadening connections between research and practical policy with and for refugee communities.

What are your hopes for this work?

I wish the current NZRAP members every success as they lead in carving out this important space in NZ refugee policy. I hope CAPRS continues to work closely with them and future NZRAPs to establish well-resourced, representative and sustainable links between academia, refugee communities, civil society and government.
You have significant experience in the not-for-profit sector in Australia and the region. What suggestions do you have for how academia and civil society can work better for strengthened outcomes for refugees?

I echo the perspective of my colleagues, the NZRAP and other partners from refugee backgrounds here, who highlight the importance of placing refugee communities at the centre of this work. As allies in this space, this means starting from a place of resourced collaboration and working to ensure refugee participation through leadership, access to the decision-making table and engagement in policy development from the very start of the process.

What is one thing on your 2023 wish list?

Rather than a wishlist per se, what I want to see and what I will be working towards this 2023 is the continued development of collective efforts which deepen the understanding of and effectively implements meaningful refugee participation in Aotearoa with and for refugee communities.

Civil Society & Community Engagement, and Capacity Building

Professional Development Short Course on Evidence-Based Advocacy for the Afghan Diaspora

From 3-7 November 2022, CAPRS – in partnership with the Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP), the Mixed Migration Centre Asia (MMC), and the Danish Refugee Council Diaspora Programme hosted the 2nd Professional Development Short Course on Evidence-Based Advocacy for the Afghan Diaspora in Copenhagen, Denmark. This course brought together twenty-three participants from Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, to share their experience and expertise, as well as build upon their advocacy goals. In the context of the recent changes in Afghanistan, and the deteriorating humanitarian situation, this course will provide a platform for the diaspora to connect and to build the platform of knowledge necessary for effective advocacy.

As the situation in Afghanistan continues to unfold, CAPRS looks forward to strengthening engagement with civil society organisations, diaspora organisations, and others. Only through partnerships and building a bridge between academia and other groups can we be better placed to achieve tangible and impactful change.

A full overview of the course and outcomes can be found [here](#).
Advocacy Toolkit for Diaspora Organisations and Launch Event

As part of CAPRS ongoing commitment and support to strengthening ties providing support to refugee communities, CAPRS in partnership with the Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP) and the Danish Refugee Council Diaspora Programme jointly developed an Advocacy Toolkit for diaspora organisations.

Diaspora communities, organisations, and individuals are increasingly vocal and influential, advocating for social, economic, and political change in their country of origin, the country of residence and in the international sphere. This toolkit provides practical guidance for diaspora organisations in their advocacy work.

Section 1 begins with a brief introduction by providing the definition of advocacy and highlighting its relevance to the diaspora. The section also presents an overview of the different approaches to advocacy and key concepts to consider before engaging in advocacy work.

Section 2 outlines the main steps in developing an advocacy strategy, consisting of prioritising advocacy issues, analysing the external context, setting the theory of change, goal, objectives, and indicators, defining the target audience, developing the core message, selecting the right approach and planning monitoring, evaluation and learning. The section also provides examples of tools with step-by-step descriptions and templates to guide diaspora actors in the multi-stage process of developing an advocacy strategy.

Section 3 provides examples of methods that can be used at different levels of advocacy, including local, national, and transnational levels. The section presents a detailed description of selected methods that can be used to conduct advocacy with specific focus on their relevance for diaspora communities. The selected methods elaborated in the section are: making use of inside track, making use of international mechanisms, using (social) media and promoting/protesting countries of origin.

Section 4 discusses the potential risks that may occur throughout the project cycle of an advocacy campaign with a specific focus on the risks of diaspora advocacy in fragile contexts. The section also offers tools and strategies to navigate these challenges and minimise risks.

Section 5 addresses the often-overlooked aspect of emotions in advocacy work and presents some tools and guidance focusing on the role of self- and collective care.

Section 6 offers conclusions and recommendations to diaspora actors and organisations in their advocacy.

To officially launch the toolkit, on 22 March 2023, CAPRS’ Rez Gardi, along with Shaharzad Akbar (former Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission) and Mohamad Katour (Project Manager at IMPACT) joined a panel entitled ‘Value of Diaspora Advocacy’. This event shone a light on the importance of engaging with and supporting diaspora communities and provided a range of inspirational ideas for future collaboration, mutual support, and advocacy approaches.
New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel

Since the inaugural New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel (NZRAP) was launched in July 2022, CAPRS has continued to provide secretarial support for the nine members as they focus on developing a strong foundation for this work and, importantly the work of future panels.

Currently, the NZRAP is working on developing their internal governance and media policies, setting key policy priorities, preparing their public media and communications plans and drafting MOUs with key stakeholders.

In parallel with this critical internal work, the NZRAP has also commenced their public engagement at both the national and global levels. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this has included quarterly meetings with Immigration Minister Michael Wood, presenting at the AUT Symposium ‘Refugee Journeys: Celebrating diversity, participation and future thinking’, and ongoing discussion with Immigration New Zealand in preparation for the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR). Where significantly this year’s New Zealand’s government delegation will include a representative with lived refugee experience for the first time ever.

Additionally, at the global level, members of the NZRAP have engaged in planning for the Global Refugee Forum, attended meetings with visiting UNHCR delegations, and represented New Zealand at the ATCR Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) in Cork, Ireland to discuss and drive momentum behind effective and meaningful refugee participation across all levels of the global refugee ecosystem.

More details about the current NZRAP panel members can be found via the CAPRS website here.
Inclusive Higher Education

Higher Education and Refugees Forum: How can UK universities respond in a time of crisis?

On 18 January 2023, Times Higher Education hosted the Higher Education and Refugees Forum, at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. The forum was an opportunity to engage and connect universities and key stakeholders across the United Kingdom in addressing the urgent need to support refugees and those forcibly displaced in accessing higher education opportunities. The intention was to discuss broadly issues concerning refugee higher education for UK universities both inside the UK and outside. Together, there was 18 hours of dialogue engaging over 90 professionals, scholars and students.

CAPRS was represented at the Forum by Co-Founder Gul Inanc, as well as current Non-Residential Fellow Jonathan Birtwell. During the session titled “How can UK universities respond to refugee crises outside the UK?”, Jonathan was able to share reflections, best practice, and ideas from his research in Malaysia looking at higher education for refugee students. Several themes emerging from the session were:

• UK universities can become actively involved in the programme accreditation process by finding alternative ways to admit refugee applicants who cannot rely on original transcripts.
• More accessible support to be provided locally rather than aiming at creating satellite campuses. Blended programme options to be implemented, aiming at offering the same on-campus experience by creating student opportunities, networks, social career support, mentoring and individualised care.
• Promote research and ideas in major host countries, reconsigning their expertise, contribution and employability standards.
• Mindset shift to be promoted when discovering new partnerships opportunities, to avoid prioritising only a few elitist institutions.

Following the meeting and the discussions which took place, the conference organisers are prioritising:

• Supporting broader coordination between UK universities on issues of refugee inclusion
• Developing guidance for universities in the development of connected higher education programmes for refugees
• Advocating with university leadership for greater inclusion of refugees
Upcoming activities

- On the 27th and 28th of April, CAPRS together with the Kaldor Centre will be organizing an academic symposium titled: "Meeting the ‘Dual Imperative’: Working towards solutions for displacement in the Asia Pacific through policy-oriented research".

Registration for the event can be done [here](#).

Recent / Upcoming Publications and Events


Jones, Evan, Keegan, David & Khakbaz, Mitra (co-authored), "Are Sovereignty and Humanitarianism Mutually Exclusive? An Exploration of the role of civil society in bridging the gap", Rethinking Refugee Protection in Southeast Asia; Between Responsibility and Sovereignty, co-ed by Reyvi Marinas, Susan Kneebone, Antje Missbach, (publisher and publishing date TBC).


AUT Refugee Symposium

In November 2023, CARPS participated in the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Symposium - ‘Refugee Journeys: Celebrating diversity, participation and future thinking’. This event was held at AUT's city campus in Tamaki Makaurau, Auckland, New Zealand.

The symposium highlighted the intersections of social equity, human rights and well-being through recent research while focusing on communities with refugee backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand. The one-day event commenced with a keynote address from Helen Clark, former New Zealand Prime Minister. It brought together diverse participants from varied disciplinary and community backgrounds to meet and network. CAPRS joined fellow researchers, postgraduate students, civil society and government representatives to discuss recent refugee policy developments and present their research.

CAPRS staff and affiliated scholars presented and facilitated workshops across three parallel sessions. This included:

- ‘Resettlement trajectories of 24,000 refugee sub-groups in Aotearoa New Zealand, from 1997 to 2019: Insights from the Integrated Data Infrastructure’
  Presented by: Arezoo Malihi, Annie Chiang, Barry Milne, Dan Exeter, and Jay Marlowe

- ‘Mapping Refugee Services in Aotearoa: A social network analysis’
  Presented by: Jay Marlowe, Marissa Kaloga, Rasha Abu Safieh, Toongkyu Page Zi and Miriam Acebillo Baque

- ‘A Safe Start for Asylum Seekers and a Fair Future for Convention Refugees’
  Presented by Michelle Oledan Ferns, Bernard Samah (Asylum Seeker Support Trust), Murdoch Stephens and Jay Marlowe

CAPRS also supported the participation of the New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel (NZRAP) with their first public presentation as part of the ‘Navigating refugee identities’ stream.

CAPRS would like to thank all the staff, affiliated scholars, postgraduate students and friends for their efforts to present and engage this sector dialogue. Special thanks to the Co-Host Nadia Charania, Eleanor Holroyd, Charles Mpofu (Migrant and Refugee Health Research Centre) and Tim Maloney (School of Social Sciences & Public Policy).

Research Updates

Professor Jay Marlowe

Amongst a range of different research projects currently being pursued by Dr Marlowe, his two primary studies are:

Social Network Analysis: The findings of this study are being presented across the country and the team will use these interactions to identify the qualitative component of this study.

Settlement Outcomes: Integrated Data Infrastructure: Working in partnership with Dr Arezoo Malihi, we have identified nearly 25,000 people from refugee backgrounds through New Zealand’s Integrated Data Infrastructure. Through this, we have longitudinal data across several settlement outcomes related to employment, income, social welfare, mobility, housing, education, and language acquisition. This data is now has been presented to across the refugee sector and government to help inform advocacy and policy development. One paper has been accepted with minor amendments and numerous papers are in development.
Dr. Gül İnanc

Gül has continued to deliver an online course on Culture & Identity for refugee students at Dadaab and Kakuma camps in Kenya. This course is designed as part of the curriculum, which is offered globally by Open Society University Network and Bard College, Berlin.

She has partnered with Prof. Diya Abdo of Guilford College, USA to develop a 1 day boot camp training course on the roles of universities in resettlement process, addressing to the leaders of the NASH (National Association of System Heads). This course is being delivered in 9 different states to university presidents between April-June 2023.

Policy Equality Advocacy for refugees in New Zealand

A Rainbow Refugee Quota for Aotearoa

In September 2022, the Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies released the A Rainbow Refugee Quota report. A Rainbow Refugee Quota for Aotearoa is an attempt at policy change. The report’s audience is decision makers in government, but it also recognises the need for policy to be guided by those affected by this policy: LGBTIQ+ refugees who are seeking protection and those who have already found it in Aotearoa and who form the basis of community solidarity and support. Intended as a green paper, this report positions Aotearoa to show international leadership in LGBTIQ+ protection by creating a special rainbow category under its refugee quota. Throughout the report, we identify how this category could be potentially supported and structured.

The report was written in the first half of 2022 by Dr Murdoch Stephens in his role as a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Auckland’s Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies (CAPRS) with support from a Rainbow Advisory Group. The creation of an advisory group sought to add to the primacy of the voices of LGBTIQ+ refugees in policy making, as recommended by the Canberra Statement on LGBTIQ+ refugees. The use of the eight-person Rainbow Advisory Group to consult on this report highlights the opportunities and challenges of this subcategory. Five advisory group members have a lived experience as refugees. The group offered diverse perspectives as convention and quota refugees as well as gaining refugee status for a range of reasons, not all of which included their SOGIESC. Non-refugee members held affiliations to the University of Auckland, New Zealand Red Cross and the Human Rights Commission. The group met in three online forums to discuss the report and gave feedback as the report progressed.

To date, there has not been a systematic overview of all LGBTIQ+ issues for refugees in Aotearoa. This report does not seek to be that exhaustive of the asylum procedures, or case histories of LGBTIQ+ asylum claims in Aotearoa or internationally. Where studies exist, they have been cited in the footnotes, and the author encourages policy makers and the public to use these documents to explore the issues in more depth. The author also encourages interested parties to work collaboratively across the rainbow community and sector, noting the existing work of Rainbow Path in Auckland and the emerging work of Rainbow Haven in Wellington.
Podcasts
Since September 2021, CAPRS Co-Founder Rêz Gardî has been connecting and engaging with inspiring individuals across the world as part of CAPRS ‘Unfiltered’ Podcast Series. This podcast was created as a platform for unfiltered honest discussions about issues that impact the lives of those forcibly displaced and possible solutions from a range of perspectives. In addition, the podcast both empowers and amplifies refugee voices around the globe, contributing to increasing awareness about the situations for forcibly displaced people.

Over the past six months, Rêz has hosted three interviews with well-known and inspiring individuals. Her most recent podcasts are with former Manus Island detainee and human rights defender Abdul Aziz Muhamat, founder of Fugee School Deborah Henry, and refugee youth advocate Apajok Biar.

All podcasts are available on the CAPRS website, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Whooshkaa, and other podcast platforms.

CAPRS in the media
The Conversation: “Why does NZ welcome Ukrainians fleeing war and not others trying to do the same?”

Radio NZ: Why are asylum seekers treated differently to other refugees?