



Refugee Digest 42

July 3rd 2020

Refugees, Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Displaced Persons.

The Secretary General of the UN has published an important policy brief on *COVID-19 and People on the Move*. It makes many important points and helps frame the connection between the pandemic and mobile people. It particularly stresses the aspects of the health crisis, the socio economic crisis and the crisis of protection. Pope Francis also spoke of the protection dimension, which is a key issue in refugee praxis. This is a key document for thinking though the refugee crises in a post-pandemic world.

<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/policy-brief-covid-19-and-people-on-the-move-june-2020/>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/policy-brief-covid-19-and-people-move-june-2020>

The pandemic continues to affect the most vulnerable disproportionately, leading to ever deeper measures of desperation. As the consequences of the pandemic show themselves, we are beginning to see more clearly its impact on mobile people. There are concerns, for example, that many undocumented people are not going for the COVID-19 tests because they are required to produce some form of identity document. Many are afraid that this will expose their undocumented situation. Also, and it is largely anecdotal, many stories indicate that, while most people who break lockdown rules are cautioned and released, those found to be without documents or with expired ones have to face court appearances. Much of this could have been resolved if mobile people had been included *ab initio* in the formation of policy for situations such as the present one. The following article, written earlier in the lockdown, highlights this need.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-03-20-foreign-migrants-must-be-included-in-covid-19-response/>

This link provides updated information with regard to mobile people during the lockdown.

https://scalabrini.org.za/news/covid_info/

Among the concerns is the growing evidence of mental health crises amongst migrants and refugees.

<https://www.newframe.com/migrants-face-mental-health-crisis-amid-lockdown/?fbclid=IwAR1dZIDfVzwTrmwkq221c2rY7lmlfGDlwHL41xDe5DtCxwkDrf8Qb4O8WS>

In other parts of the world, the vulnerability of LGBT+ people has been particularly highlighted, especially in terms of isolation from the community. The following article explores some of this.

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/policybristol/policy-briefings/queer-asylum-covid/>

Many of the special COVID-19 benefits that have been granted to groups of migrants and refugees have come about only as the result of hard advocacy. The court victory extending the Social Relief of Distress Grant to asylum seekers and those with Special Permits is a case in point. We now need to ensure that these hard-won inclusions are maintained after the pandemic.

<https://scalabrini.org.za/news/victory-in-covid19-social-relief-grant-court-case>

Most migrants in the SADC region move in order to find better work opportunities and better livelihoods. At so many levels, ranging from closed borders to job losses and increasing poverty, the issue of migration and labour in times of COVID-19 has come under the spotlight.

https://ropretoria.iom.int/sites/default/files/IOM%20Southern%20Africa%20Snapshot%202%20-%2015%20June%202020_0.pdf

One of the very complex consequences of closed borders has been the vehicular traffic carrying trade goods and even essential goods. The second link shows updated guidelines which incorporate lessons learnt since the first set of guidelines. The truck routes are also a significant means of movement for migrants.

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202006120514.html>

<https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/covid-19/regional/3782-sadc-guidelines-on-harmonisation-and-facilitation-of-cross-border-transport-operations-across-the-region-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-revision-23-june-2020/file.html>

In a move welcomed by refugee and church organisations, the US Supreme Court ruled in favour of the ‘Dreamers’, those young people who came to the US as children, mostly undocumented, but who have lived most of their lives there. It is a positive sign amidst so many ominous signs for refugees and migrants.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/06/18/dreamers-daca-recipients-celebrate-rare-supreme-court-win-over-trump/3213617001/>

<https://www.voterveice.net/JFI/Campaigns/75277/Respond>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/06/19/donald-trump-tries-again-kill-daca-despite-supreme-court-ruling/3221106001/>

World Refugee Day 2020, which was on 20th June, is the UN’s special day of focus on the plight of refugees across the globe. This year the theme was ‘Every Action Counts.’

<https://www.unhcr.org/refugeeday/>

https://www.globalgiving.org/learn/world-refugee-day-facts/?gclid=EAIAIQobChMI5rCkodu6gIVTe3tCh1JrA8sEAAYAiAAEgKIcvD_BwE

The SA government’s statement to mark the day focused on the courage and resilience of refugees.

https://www.gov.za/WorldRefugeeDay2020?gclid=EAIAIQobChMIp8nO7van6gIVkIGyCh2O-QttEAAYAiAAEgLSIfD_BwE

While the Church observes World Refugee and Migrants Sunday in September, the Pope made reference to the UN observance and noted that the pandemic had caused great suffering for people on the move, and asked for a commitment to their protection and for the care of the planet.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-06/pope-angelus-appeal-care-creation-migrants-refugees.html>

<http://www.internationalunionsuperiorsgeneral.org/faith-based-organizations-world-refugee-day-2020/>

<https://novenanews.com/pope-francis-world-refugee-day-rosary-migrants/>

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