



Refugee Digest 55

30th July 2021

Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Persons

The plight of mobile people during the various levels of lockdown continues to be complicated and unpredictable. One of the articles listed below speaks of the 'heightened levels of precarity' for marginalised groups. What is true of the world is also seen in microcosm in South Africa.

The first article looks at the uneven, patchwork approach to refugee and asylum seekers and points to the much needed work still to be done to ensure compliance with a human rights culture.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-06-17-south-africas-patchwork-treatment-of-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-shows-much-to-be-done-to-ensure-human-rights-for-all/>

The government has promised that both documented and undocumented foreigners will be eligible for the vaccination, but the details of how they can register are still unclear. This article explores that reality. The EVDS requires some form of identity document for it to work and this excludes the undocumented. This needs to be remedied nationally.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-07-04-excluding-refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants-undermines-an-inclusive-vaccine-roll-out/>

The Banking Association of SA has clarified that its banks do not automatically restrict the accounts of people whose asylum or refugee documents have expired. It advises that customers take copies of the DHA document extending the validity of documents with them when engaging banks.

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

The DHA has again extended the validity of documents that have expired during the lockdown, and advises that, despite the work being done online to renew documents, the new expiry date will be 30th September 2021. The Department encourages holders of long-term visas to renew their documents online.

<http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/statements-speeches/1458-home-affairs-minister-dr-aaron-motsoaledi-extends-the-validity-period-of-different-categories-of-temporary-visas>

Despite the statistics given by the DHA (9 785 s.24 renewals and 28 249 s.22 renewals for asylum seekers, all online), some refugees and asylum seekers still experience diverse difficulties with the online system.

<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/refugees-frustrated-home-affairs-online-renewal-system/>

For those who follow the important work of the UNHCR in South Africa, this link concerns the funding needs of the local Office and the amounts pledged for its work, as well as the deficit as at 13th July 2021.

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/fundingupdates/2021-07-13/South%20Africa%20MCO%20Funding%20Update%2013%20July%202021.pdf>

The UNHCR has also issued its Report of Activities for SA for the first quarter of 2021. It provides an important overview of the reach of its work.

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/South%20Africa%20fact%20sheet%20January-March%202021.pdf>

This article details various reports of xenophobia amongst students at high school level and the bureaucratic difficulties some students face in obtaining documentation, especially during the lockdown period. For many children these documents are also essential for access to tertiary education.

<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/xenophobia-alive-even-schools-human-rights-meeting-hears/>

This link takes you to an important assessment of state responses to people on the move during the time of the pandemic in Africa. It broadly characterises the responses as exclusion, expulsion and securitisation.

<https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/covid-19-and-people-on-the-move-in-africa-the-impact-of-state-responses-to-the-pandemic-on-migrants-refugees-asylum-seekers-and-internally-displaced-people/>

At the global level, various narratives around mobile people continue to be contested. As this small sample shows, it is often the faith-based communities who challenge this narrative of exclusion.

The International Catholic Migration Commission, in a document entitled *'No One is saved Alone'* says that “effective global recovery can only happen through access to healthcare, vaccinations, decent work and fundamental rights.”

https://www.icmc.net/2021/06/22/no-one-is-saved-alone/?utm_source=Center+for+Migration+Studies+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=89842492dc-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_12_03_05_58_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_74e5cba118-89842492dc-115675530

The US Bishops have recommitted themselves to champion the plight of refugees, to welcome them and to ensure their dignity.

<https://www.usccb.org/news/2021/us-bishops-migration-chairman-observance-world-refugee-day-june-20>

The same Episcopal Conference has given support to specific decisions of the courts with regard to DACA, thus concretising principles in policy matters.

<https://justiceformigrants.org/statements/u-s-bishops-migration-chairman-urges-congress-to-act-after-court-ruling-on-daca/>

160 church-based groups in the Americas have appealed to the various Episcopal Conferences for co-operation in actualising core faith values in their work with migrants.

<https://religionnews.com/2021/06/18/catholic-groups-from-mexico-central-america-and-the-u-s-ask-church-for-support-in-helping-migrants/>

Finally, church organisations have teamed up with the UN to assist ‘stateless people’

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2021/06/catholic-agency-joins-forces-with-u-n-to-help-people-who-are-stateless/>

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