

# A year in review

The academic year has seen new and inspiring events and developments that have helped re-shape the role of the Centre in the field of research, teaching and outreach.

We are proud to have secured two Fell Fund grants in the course of this academic year, one for research into Romani migration and mobility in Europe and one for research into deportation and the development of citizenship. We hope that both of these grants will provide platforms for further major research into these two important areas of our work.

Expanding our current framework of research we are developing new ideas and ambitious agendas for work on environmental displacement, post-conflict displacement in the Middle East and forced migration from the Horn of Africa to the Great Lakes region.

We held two successful conferences at the beginning of the year on Environmental Displacement and Statelessness, as well as several well-attended workshops focusing on displacement in Somalia and in Colombia. A policy briefing on Environmental Displacement was produced at the beginning of the year. A second one entitled 'Development assistance and refugees – Towards a North-South grand bargain' has recently been published.

On the horizon for next year are a number of major conferences: on Protection (in September), Deportation (December), Romani Mobilities (January 2010) and Faith-Based Humanitarianism (towards the end of the academic year). We are delighted to be hosting Jan Egeland, former United Nations Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator as this year's Harrrell-Bond speaker in November in Oxford. We are also excited to be co-hosting a London-based event to which we will be inviting António Guterres, in collaboration with the Oxford Centre for Portuguese Studies for the spring. All in all, the pace of activities remains brisk, and we are looking forward to another busy year at the Centre.



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## Sergio Vieira de Mello Lecture, Brasilia

**In late March RSC's Visiting Professor Gil Loescher gave the Sergio Vieira de Mello Lecture on human rights at the Supreme Labour Court in Brasilia. He addressed an audience of over 600 people including jurists, members of the Brazilian government and the international community like the UNHCR and NGOs, and students.**

**Loescher spoke about the human rights and political challenges of protracted refugee displacement. In particular, he discussed how we should understand protracted displacement, what states, the UN system, NGOs and other actors should be doing or advocating, and how solutions to these situations can be achieved, given political and other constraints. Loescher called for the international community to adopt a comprehensive and integrated approach to resolving some of today's protracted refugee situations.**

*The text of the lecture is available at [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/loescher.html](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/loescher.html)*

## Professor Roger Zetter speaking to the IASC

An invitation from UN Under-Secretary General Sir John Holmes to RSC Director Professor Roger Zetter to brief the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals on 'Strengthening Humanitarian Response to Forced Displacement and Migration Resulting from Climate Change', provided an outstanding opportunity for the RSC to be represented at the foremost global humanitarian assistance forum.

As the pace of debate and policy making quickens in anticipation of the Copenhagen UN Climate Change Conference 2009, developing the response to the migration impacts of climate change is high on agenda. The invitation came as a result of [RSC's research programme](#), my earlier work as co-author of an [RSC Policy Briefing on Environmentally Displaced Peoples](#) and an IOM Commission on Protection and the Role of Legal and Normative Frameworks.

Present at the briefing were the heads of the eight UN organisations responsible for the humanitarian clusters and organisations such as the UNHCR, ICRC, World Bank and IOM.

Focussing on the issue of rights protection, the key challenges presented were:

- definitional problems of categorising environmental migrants and 'forced' migration;
- adapting current humanitarian response capacities to increasingly frequent disasters and extreme weather events;
- the challenge of developing responses to long-onset impacts of desertification and rising sea levels;
- developing responses for populations from disappearing island states;
- enhancing protection norms and legal frameworks in the 1998 IDP Guiding Principles, since the majority of those displaced will be IDPs;
- filling the protection gap for trans-border environmental migrants;
- strengthening the international institutional architecture of clusters;
- the crucial need to enhance national and local level operational capacity on governance, policies and practices for mitigation, preparedness and responses to displacement;
- developing adaptation strategies and rights protection frameworks for the majority who will not migrate.

Professor Roger Zetter, Director of the Refugee Studies Centre

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## Workshop on conflict in Colombia: talks about non-negotiation

On 21–22 May 2009 at the Town Hall in Oxford, the RSC hosted a two-day workshop entitled ‘A Non-Negotiated Solution to the Colombian Conflict? The Implications for Sustainable Peace and Democracy’. This event examined how a ‘non-negotiated solution’ to the Colombian conflict might impact on the country’s political and economic future, and on the social fabric which has been so damaged by decades of violence.

Jointly organised by the RSC and the International Centre for Participation Studies at the University of Bradford, the workshop brought together over 80 participants from Colombia, the US and Europe. Issues addressed in the presentations included: an examination of the prospects for social and economic justice for internally displaced people; the role of gender change in constructing a non-violent Colombia; ethical dimensions of the search for peace; and the role of civil society.

A selection of the presentations are being made freely available as podcasts on Forced Migration Online: [www.forcedmigration.org/events/2009/colombian-conflict](http://www.forcedmigration.org/events/2009/colombian-conflict)

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## Workshop on humanitarian action in Somalia

On 8–9 June, the RSC hosted the workshop ‘Humanitarian Action in Somalia – Expanding Humanitarian Space’, mapping out the challenges, methods used to address humanitarian needs, and suggesting ways forward.

The event brought together academics, humanitarian agencies, policy advisors and donor representatives. The presence of the Somali diaspora and Islamic NGOs enabled exchange of ideas and perspectives.

It emerged that organisations are faced with predicaments associated with humanitarian action and the realities of delivering aid, challenges the ideals of humanitarian principles. The ‘politicisation of aid’ has affected the perceptions of agencies and contributed to their loss of credibility. The framing of Somalia as a ‘failed state’ has influenced donors and had an impact on humanitarian response.

Exploring opportunities such as improved partnerships with private and local initiatives, including Islamic structures, as well as the diaspora, but also expanding innovative programming could help overcome challenges related to security and access.

The workshop report can be found at [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/conf\\_conferences\\_0609.html](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/conf_conferences_0609.html)

For more information, contact [rscpolicy@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:rscpolicy@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

## Forced Migration Policy Briefing

The RSC has launched its second policy briefing on *Development assistance and refugees – Towards a North-South grand bargain?* by Dr Alexander Betts, Director of the Global Migration Governance Project, Department of Politics and International Relations, Oxford University.

**This policy brief examines the role that development assistance can play in enhancing refugee protection and overcoming protracted refugee situations. It argues that an integrated development approach, supporting both refugees and local host communities, can be a ‘win-win’ solution for both Northern donors and Southern hosts, while simultaneously benefiting refugees. For these potential benefits to be realised, there will need to be a commitment by donors to develop new budget lines and by hosts to facilitate greater integration of refugees.**

**The concept of ‘refugees and development’ should be revived by UNHCR, embraced by development agencies such as UNDP and the World Bank, and made a central component of the ongoing Global Forum on Migration and Development debates on ‘migration and development.’**

The brief may be found at [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/pub\\_policy.html](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/pub_policy.html)

## Call for papers: Romani mobilities in Europe

The RSC is organising, with the financial support of the John Fell Oxford University Press Research Fund, an international conference on Romani migration and mobility in Europe. The conference takes place in mid-January 2010 and aims to convene scholars and students across a variety of disciplines to discuss the multiple dimensions and impacts of Romani mobilities in Europe.

The main aim of this conference is to map the variety and directions of contemporary Romani mobilities in, out and within the EU, including both economic and forced migration, as well as forced or voluntary repatriation, and to locate these mobilities into the broader political, social, historical and cultural context.

Proposals for papers are invited that investigate aspects related to these broader themes. The deadline for submitting paper proposals is 18 September 2009.

For more information, please contact the conference convener [nando.sigona@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nando.sigona@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

The full Call for Papers may be found at [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/conf\\_conferences.html](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/conf_conferences.html)

## Visiting Fellow Katy Long

I first arrived at the RSC in October 2007, intending to spend one term as a Visiting Study Fellow. I had just begun the second year of my Ph.D. on *The Politics of Refugee Repatriation at Cambridge*, a mere hundred miles away. However, Cambridge is somewhat of a desert when it comes to studying migration, so discovering the rich resources at the RSC was a delight. The three months I spent here transformed my Ph.D. In fact, the impact was so positive, in January of this year I returned to spend two more terms.

Visiting fellows at the RSC are neither students nor staff, so the emphasis is very much on self-directed learning. Yet what could have been a lonely experience has instead been the opposite. RSC's staff are exceptionally welcoming, keen to share insights from their own research and treating us as equal colleagues. I've also been lucky enough to meet a number of visiting fellows who are now valued colleagues and friends. The programme tends to attract a mix of academics and professionals, and I've found the resulting lively discussions helpful in trying to decide how to move from academic study into practical advocacy. There are also more formal opportunities to present your research at the RSC's seminar series or as a working paper, which can often lead to unexpected connections being made between different projects.

What I have gained most from my time at the RSC is a sense of confidence in the value of my research and the importance of work in this area. In the next month, I will be submitting my completed Ph.D. and then working as a tutor on the RSC Summer School in Forced Migration. I'm still not sure what happens after that: trying to find gainful employment in the current economic climate is challenging at best! However, I do know that my time at the Centre has been incredibly rewarding in terms of my personal development, and I'm sure I will return to the RSC in the future.

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For more information on the Visiting Fellows Programme, please visit [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/teaching\\_fellows.html](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/teaching_fellows.html)



## Record year for MSc Students

The RSC bids farewell to the exceptionally successful students reading for the MSc in Forced Migration in 2008–09. During the year students took core courses in International Human Rights and Refugee Law, International Relations and Forced Migration, Introduction to Forced Migration, and Research Methods. They also had the choice of a diverse range of country-specific and thematic optional courses.

In addition, the students undertook group research projects on a range of topics engaging directly with the methodological, epistemological and ethical issues inherent to research concerning forced migrants. Themes explored included the intergenerational transfer of values, Sudanese asylum seekers' perceptions of detention and counselling services available to refugees.

In keeping with previous years, students produced a diverse collection of dissertations reflecting the multi-disciplinary nature of the course and its global outlook. A paper by Matthew Albert from Australia on the *prima facie* determination of refugee status received the highest ever mark awarded on the MSc course. Matthew's work and a dissertation by Erik Abild from Norway discussing humanitarian space in Somalia were recommended for publication. In a record-breaking year a total of ten students were awarded a Distinction for their dissertations with five of these achieving Distinctions overall.

The year's cohort was very active beyond the compulsory elements of the course. For many, the highlight was a trip to Geneva where they met with António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and representatives from a range of international organisations. In addition to participating in the RSC's Public Seminar Series and the informal Seminar Series, students also organised their own series, sharing their experience and knowledge of particular situations of displacement around the world. Several also found time to support local initiatives, volunteering with organisations such as Asylum Welcome and Refugee Resource.

The RSC extends its congratulations to the 2008–09 students and looks forward to welcoming the 2009–10 students in October.

For further details about the MSc, contact [eleanor.parkin@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:eleanor.parkin@qeh.ox.ac.uk)