



REFUGEE
STUDIES
CENTRE

Strategic plan

2013-2018

OXFORD DEPARTMENT OF
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Learning how to draw in
Adiyaman camp, Turkey.



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OUR VISION

The Refugee Studies Centre aims to lead the world in research and education in the area of refugee and forced migration studies and to share its work on a national and global scale. We aim to realise this vision by taking forward new and transformative approaches to research, teaching and engagement with society, informed by Oxford's long traditions of independent scholarship and academic freedom.

The University of Oxford's success and reputation are built upon the continuing quality of its scholarship and the richness of its academic resources and community. The goal of the Refugee Studies Centre is to work from within this exceptional context to enhance research and learning in forced migration and refugee studies in ways that both support individual achievements and promote collaborative joint enterprise. In what follows, we set out a wide-ranging view of this strategic plan in the form of four sets of objectives:

1. First, we outline the major *strategic challenges* that we set ourselves as a Centre within the institutions of the University and of the Oxford Department of International Development.
2. Second, we identify the two key *new priorities* which we believe will enable us to respond with agility to the changing world of the humanitarian aid regime and to be at the forefront of shaping that change through the outstanding quality of what we do. These new priorities work across all our core activities.
3. Third, we review our approach to these *core activities*, as articulated in our *core strategies* for research, education and wider engagement with society, and set out how we will maintain that constancy of excellence which has drawn such a rich concentration of intellectual resource to the Centre, Department and University.
4. Finally, we show how these aims and priorities may be facilitated with *enabling strategies*.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

We believe that universities hold a responsibility for shaping tolerant societies through effective communication of findings from academic endeavour. ***The first challenge we set ourselves as a research centre is to develop our capacity to generate and share knowledge beyond the immediate environment of University of Oxford, regionally, nationally and globally.***

The Refugee Studies Centre and the Oxford Department of International Development exist for the wider public good. At the Refugee Studies Centre, we must ensure that our research not only continues to be transformative at an academic and scholarly level, but that it also contributes to public policy and practice. ***Our second challenge is to identify effective ways to contribute more to public policymaking, and to the cultural, social and economic life of the communities in which our research can have an impact, including our local community.***

As countries across the world invest heavily in higher education, new competitors are emerging. We believe that in this global age, self-sufficiency can no longer be enough. Where there are possibilities for work which speak to our key mission, potential competitors are also potential collaborators. ***Our third challenge, therefore, is to identify where we can flexibly and effectively support joint activities with other world-class institutions, to the benefit of both research and teaching.***

Oxford's collegiate structure provides a natural culture for the development of interdisciplinary ideas, bringing together staff and students from across the disciplines on a daily basis; we believe we can do more to harness this activity. ***Our fourth challenge is to establish effective ways to approach problems from an interdisciplinary perspective, and to draw strength from collaborations across departments and research groups in the wider University.***

The burden of meeting the cost of studying at university is increasingly being shifted onto students. The Refugee Studies Centre's concerns are particularly directed towards postgraduates and participants in our International Summer School in Forced Migration, who may be deterred from study by the financial cost. ***Our fifth challenge over the period of this strategic plan***

is to continue to build on our scholarship and bursary schemes, working to ensure that no potential applicant, particularly applicants from the global South and refugee backgrounds, is deterred by financial barriers and that no student's success is hampered by financial difficulties.



NEW PRIORITIES

In relation to these strategic challenges, we have identified two overarching priorities for development over the period of this strategic plan, spanning our core activities. Enabling the Refugee Studies Centre to shape and respond to the rapidly shifting external environment in new and significant ways, these priorities have the potential to be transformative for our Department, our staff and our students.

Priority 1: Global reach. To improve the Refugee Studies Centre's position as a global forum for intellectual engagement through the proactive communication of ideas generated at the Centre and through openness to new ideas generated elsewhere.

We shall achieve this through:

- Developing further effective structures to enable sustained research collaborations and partnerships with other world-class institutions.
- Exploring new opportunities to advance high-quality research by the Refugee Studies Centre abroad.
- Sustaining the successes of *Forced Migration Review*, the Policy Briefing series and the Working Paper series, which use the RSC's strength and reputation as a base to bring together ideas, analysis, practice and policy from a large number of sources globally and feed them back out into that same large and diverse set of communities.
- Continuing to enable greater digital access to the Refugee Studies Centre's research, ideas and collections through the RSC website (www.rsc.ox.ac.uk), Forced Migration Online, (www.forcedmigration.org) and dissemination of digitised resources.
- Developing approaches to international engagement that take advantage of the breadth of activities undertaken both within the Centre and the wider University.
- Refining our approaches to the recruitment and support of postgraduate international students, particularly from the global South.

Major universities in modern times need to work in sustained partnerships with centres of excellence elsewhere in the world. We will seek to develop partnerships in an increasingly coordinated fashion at the institutional level,

noting that these may be most effective in areas where research and teaching strengths are complementary, while encouraging connectivity between our group and other research groups at the level of individual projects. We will maintain the freedom for individuals within the research group to decide what to research, while making it clear where and how to access expertise at the Refugee Studies Centre.

An effective online presence will form part of this strategy. We will continue to network our activity digitally in order to direct those seeking knowledge about any area of academic study to relevant work in the field carried out at the Refugee Studies Centre. Access to our and the University's collections will be improved through an enhanced virtual presence. Over the life of the plan, we will work to strengthen the coherence of our digital presence, and we will further develop our teaching resources and courses that are available globally. We aim to expand the University's contribution to the public understanding of forced migration and other outreach and engagement activities.

Priority 2: Networking, communication and interdisciplinarity. To build on the Refugee Studies Centre's, and Oxford's, multiple disciplinary strengths and enable collaborations in new and developing areas.

We shall strengthen our interdisciplinary activities through:

- Working with partner organisations to address issues of global significance, many of which are interdisciplinary in nature.
- Developing interdisciplinary research themes by building upon and networking existing activity in a fashion that enables intellectual cross-fertilisation.
- Developing courses and workshops that draw upon the richness of Oxford's intellectual environment across multiple disciplines.
- Sustaining and building upon the successes of *Forced Migration Review* to invite the exchange of knowledge across disciplinary boundaries and make connections between the forced migration community and specialists in other fields (eg most recently climate change, disability, technology and LGBTBI issues).
- Sharing resources between departments and beyond Oxford.
- Enhancing the use of the Refugee Studies Centre's collections in the University Libraries to promote interdisciplinary research and teaching opportunities.

We will explore opportunities to join forces with top institutions internationally to address forced migration issues of global significance that require large-scale as well as interdisciplinary collaboration.



CORE STRATEGIES

While our overarching priorities identify those areas where we aim to enhance our activity, our core strategies set out how we propose to build upon Oxford's strength and diversity in research and education, and to share these with the wider world.

Research

The Refugee Studies Centre is committed to maintaining rigour, significance and originality in research within a framework of the highest standards, infrastructure, training and integrity.

We shall further this aim through:

- Supporting our core disciplines of refugee and forced migration studies.
- Keeping academic autonomy at the heart of our research, and empowering the creative autonomy of individuals to address fundamental questions of real significance and applied questions with potential to change the world.
- Working to create new postdoctoral training and employment opportunities at the Centre for promising early career researchers in refugee and forced migration studies.
- Working with the wider Department and University to ensure access to the best facilities, databases and resources.
- Providing appropriate training in research methods and conduct to our students and staff.

We believe that deciding what to research is a matter for the individual researcher, undertaken in the environment of the Refugee Studies Centre as a whole. This belief reflects the value that the University accords to the principle of academic freedom, enabling the pursuit of academic enquiry subject to the norms and standards of scholarly enquiry, without interference or penalty. This freedom to pursue truth and understanding, whether through theoretical or empirical means, will ensure the academic soundness of our field.

The maintenance of a supportive research environment is crucial to the University's standing, and we will maintain and enhance a research group structure, administration and resources that support research at the highest level.

Education

The Refugee Studies Centre is committed to ensuring that our admissions processes for our postgraduate courses and the International Summer School in Forced Migration identify students with outstanding potential and the ability to benefit from an Oxford course, whatever their background.

We shall further this aim through:

- Developing our outreach work to reach potential university and Summer School applicants, teachers and awarding bodies.
- Realising sustainable scholarship schemes (MSc bursaries) for students, particularly from the global South and refugee backgrounds.
- Realise sustainable Summer School bursaries for practitioners and policy makers from the global south and refugee backgrounds.

We will keep under review our admissions processes. These reviews will encompass policy on attracting and identifying the best home and international students. We will also build on the University's successes in developing scholarship schemes to develop further schemes, both for scholarships towards the Refugee Studies Centre's postgraduate courses and bursaries towards the International Summer School in Forced Migration. As we establish targets for the proportions of our intake at graduate level to be supported by scholarships and bursaries, these targets will reflect the aspiration that no talented student or practitioner who could benefit from the Summer School should be unable to study at Oxford because of the cost.

Student experience

The Refugee Studies Centre is committed to ensuring that we fully equip graduates of our matriculated courses for the best of the diverse range of opportunities for study and employment available to them.

We shall further this aim through:

- Developing opportunities for funded internships.
- Encouraging students to contribute to society at a local, national and international level.
- Involving alumni in the provision of mentoring and internships for our students.

The distinctiveness and excellence of Oxford's teaching are recognised worldwide as deriving from an education system which supports students while challenging them to excel. The individualised educational experience shaped through ongoing support from a senior academic underpins our approach to postgraduate study.

Some Oxford graduates hold highly-influential positions and contribute to the social, cultural and intellectual enrichment that is the foundation of a tolerant society. We will strengthen our articulation of the important ways in which an Oxford education, and studying at the Refugee Studies Centre, equips our students to engage with today's world.

We will explicitly develop opportunities for internships, and encourage students to engage with wider communities while still at Oxford. The inclusion of our alumni in helping students achieve their potential will be vital. We will seek increased alumni involvement in mentoring and the creation of internship opportunities, and we will also develop the careers advice which we offer to graduates.

Wider engagement

Wider engagement with society pervades the activities of the Refugee Studies Centre: our core research and teaching are inseparable from this mission. Our world-class research programmes have the potential to contribute to regional, national and global enterprise and innovation. The extensive networks established in research and outreach activities, and particularly by *Forced Migration Review*, have the potential to be instrumentalised by those whose interests relate to our activities. We also educate and train research leaders of the future in our field.

The Refugee Studies Centre is committed to serving society by promoting and contributing to economic, cultural and social advances through the accessibility of our ideas, skills and expertise.

We shall further this aim through:

- Integrating knowledge from many domains, and across a range of disciplines.
- Generating new ideas and reflecting on the ideas of others.
- Undertaking to engage continually with our network of outstanding alumni, many of whom have gone on to become influential policymakers and practitioners.
- Contributing to innovation and enterprise.
- Contributing to local, regional and national communities.

Enterprise and innovation are topical new areas within the study of refugees and forced migration. The Refugee Studies Centre's ongoing research in this area positions the Centre as a place of opportunity which can attract the best researchers and students from around the world. The expertise and knowledge of our academics, staff and students already helps to inform and advise a wide range of organisations. These will include businesses, government agencies, NGOs and community groups. We intend to maintain and strengthen this aspect of our engagement.

We will foster creative, collaborative activity by our staff and students. The Refugee Studies Centre will promote interaction with policymakers, practitioners and innovators through collaborative research, consulting and other collaborative ventures. We will enhance our knowledge transfer activities, maximising social benefits through the application of our knowledge and expertise worldwide.

The Refugee Studies Centre is committed to sharing the fruits of research as widely as possible.

We shall further this aim through:

- Demonstrating the value and impact of research to society.
- Contributing to public engagement with research through lectures, public seminars, workshops, Policy Briefings etc.
- Continuing to communicate our research to a wider and more diverse

audience through our dissemination activities, including open access to our resources online at *Forced Migration Review* and Forced Migration Online.

- Continuing to improve access to research outputs through directed engagement with policymakers and practitioners, and through the work of the *Forced Migration Review* team disseminating the Centre's research and bringing together ideas, analysis, practice and policy from a large number of sources, crossing disciplinary boundaries and making connections between the forced migration community and specialists in other disciplines among its extensive network.

Research outputs need to be made accessible and comprehensible to non-specialist audiences. Our staff and students will contribute their specialist knowledge to public debate and discussions and the impact of our research will be enhanced by a strong digital presence.

We will continue to support the mission of the Oxford University Press to disseminate knowledge resulting from our research and scholarship through the *Journal of Refugee Studies*.

Finance, capital and value for money

The Refugee Studies Centre is committed to generating a sufficient recurrent surplus to sustain our administrative structure and academic activities.

We shall achieve this through:

- Using our assets efficiently.
- Maximising value for money.
- Increasing revenues including through increased research activity, securing philanthropic contributions and the careful management of a successful programme of conferences, workshops and the International Summer School in Forced Migration.
- Maintaining the existing and successful funding stream of *Forced Migration Review*.

The Centre has a duty, not only to today's public but also to future generations, to ensure the continued promotion of learning through research, teaching and wider scholarship over the long term. This requires the main-

tenance and renewal of the infrastructure, particularly the administrative posts, that support our academic work and its dissemination to wider communities. A challenge over the planning period is to ensure that the Refugee Studies Centre achieves sufficient recurrent surpluses to enable continued investment in these engagement activities.

The Refugee Studies Centre therefore aims to achieve an operational surplus (calculated as earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation) to enable maintenance of the Centre into the future. Current calculations suggest this surplus should be at least 5% annually.

Development

The Refugee Studies Centre is committed to setting and realising funding targets to support the academic strategies of the Centre, working within the context of the Oxford Department of International Development and the collegiate University.

We shall achieve this through:

- Systematic prioritisation of the Centre's needs according to academic plans.
- Strengthening our overseas collaborations and activities.
- Developing initiatives which capture the support and interest of our alumni and donors.
- Undertaking fundraising initiatives that correspond to Departmental, Divisional and University strategic priorities, and coordinating with colleagues in the Oxford Department of International Development, the Social Sciences Division and the wider University to realise successful outcomes.
- Seeking funding for several junior research fellowships at the Centre.
- Where appropriate, coordinating with colleges to maximise our respective strengths.
- We will ensure that fundraising effort concentrates most strongly on those areas where the need is greatest and the strategic goals of the Centre and University are most strongly reflected. An effective approach to prioritisation will therefore be developed.

Front cover: Thousands of people flee the IDP site at Kibati, in Democratic Republic of the Congo's North Kivu province, after hearing gunfire.

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