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REFUGEE STUDIES AT OXFORD

'SOME' HISTORY

Presented at the Conference

**THE GROWTH OF FORCED MIGRATION
NEW DIRECTIONS IN RESEARCH, POLICY AND
PRACTICE**

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REFUGEE STUDIES AT OXFORD: 'SOME' HISTORY

If we take the title of our meeting seriously, the challenge is awesome. It implies that we will be taking stock of the development of the field of refugee studies and attempting to influence the direction of research *and* policy and practice into the next Century.

Looking at the list of participants I was struck how very few of the early pioneers were going to be here and that perhaps the most useful contribution I could make in my 20 minutes is to remind us of the vision which catalysed the small network of scholars most of you have joined since 1982. In fact the best way to describe the Oxford RSP is as an expanding network of individuals around the world who have collaborated in developing this new multi-disciplinary field of academic pursuit.

At that time there were 12 million refugees in the world, the largest number in Africa. We used to often hear - and even say ourselves - that those involved in the field of refugees should be working ourselves 'out of business', that is, working towards a world without refugees. Yet, today UNHCR puts the number for which it is responsible at 22 million, including both refugees and returnees, and it estimates that there are some 50 million people in the world who are victims of forced displacement. Today most are located in Africa, Asia, the Former Yugoslavia, the new states of the Former Soviet Union, parts of the Middle East, and in Latin America - Columbia and Peru.

When the RSP began, the focus of UNHCR was on moving refugees from relief to development. Today most refugee assistance programmes are limited to providing 'care and maintenance'. Just a week ago the UN announced serious shortages with refugees encamped in the deserts of Kenya receiving only half rations. Since at best a ration is only 1,950 Kcal., this means that some 200,000 people are receiving less than required for just survival.

The numbers of armed conflicts have also radically increased since 1982, creating unknown numbers of internally displaced in 'refugee-like' situations. More recently we have also focused attention on those involuntarily uprooted by forces described as 'development'. These include projects to increase the availability of energy, which uproot millions, to those which depopulate the land upon which women depend to feed their families in favour of growing flowers for European markets.

We are not yet 'counting' the victims of *forced settlement*, the nomadic peoples of the world whose economies and ways of life poses such a challenge to the modern state. Forcing nomads to settle may be as traumatic as the process of adaptation experienced by refugees in an alien socio-economic environment. Their plight was vividly brought home to us when the Romas 'invaded' Britain last year. It is difficult to even imagine what the future holds for the young Dinka men from southern Sudan growing up in camps in Uganda and Kenya where I have just been.

We have also watched the crumbling of the edifice of asylum. From the research conducted since 1982, we can construct a list of keywords marking this process of erosion: irregular movements, first country of asylum, bogus, restrictionism, humane deterrence, detention, carriers' liability, regionalism, security risks, terrorism, Fortress Europe, Dublin, Schengen, readmission agreements, safe countries, safe havens, complex

humanitarian emergencies, preventative protection, temporary protection, *refoulement* - with integration, refugees as resources for development, 'additionality', relief to development continuum, giving way to cross-border relief, 'care and maintenance' and organised repatriation. The events of December 1998, when \$2.7m of the international humanitarian aid budget was used to pay the Tanzanian army to drive Rwandese refugees home, may well have marked the beginning of the end of safe asylum *anywhere* in the world.

Both *serendipity and historical coincidence* played a part in the initiation of refugee studies as a field of research in the early 1980s. The Centre at York University also started in 1982, concentrating on the resettlement of Vietnamese. In 1983, Ford Foundation published its *Refugees and Migrants: Problems and Program Responses*, to stimulate research. Professor Gertrud Neuwirth began the significant library collection at Carleton. The Refugee Policy Group was established in Washington. The research by Zolberg et al. had been funded by Ford Foundation. I believe that it was 1985 that Ari Zolberg and his team visited Oxford to discuss their findings?¹ UNHCR was pushing at the time for a 'developmental' approach, inspired by Jacques Cuenod. Gorman's *Refugee Aid & Development: Theory & Practice* appeared in 1983. However, most books on refugees, including my own,² have been published after 1985.

The RSP began within Queen Elizabeth House when it was still not fully part of the University of Oxford. In fact, the idea for the centre came from others at QEH when it was faced with a crisis about its own future. Professor Arthur Hazlewood was then the Warden and his encouragement and support for the vision of the RSP was vital. You could say this vision was the combined brain child of many, beginning with Sidney Waldron, Robert Chambers and Ahmed Karadawi, we all sat at *his* feet. Then there were the other senior academics who gave up their sabbaticals to work at the RSP: Elizabeth Colson, Gil Loescher, Emmanuel Marx.

Part of the dynamic was the response and commitment of Oxford students, mainly undergraduates. They packed our Wednesday seminars; they photocopied, they stuffed envelopes, they debated refugee issues in my home. Our 1984 Conference, 'Assistance to Refugees: Alternative Viewpoints', brought refugees from all over the continent to Oxford. I remember in December 1983 we had no money and no advance registrations, yet nearly 200 people attended the next March. It was organised with only a part-time secretary and the students who volunteered their time. No one who attended that conference will ever forget the experience. For the first time humanitarian organisations heard themselves being appraised by their beneficiaries. As *The Times* headline read, 'Suddenly the Silent Ones Get A Voice'. The solidarity between refugees and the government officials present was marvellous to observe. It was all recorded and transcribed and the proceeding can still be read verbatim in the library.

Then there were the student fieldtrips and internships beginning with the Lutaya Mission in 1984. Zachary Lomo, who is with us today as a lawyer, was one of those who built the school by that name in the Sudan. We discovered this field attracts the most able students;

¹ Zolberg, A., A. Suhrke, and S. Aguayo (1989), *Escape from Violence: Globalized Social Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

² *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*, Oxford University Press. This book was published in 1986, it is out of print, but available for purchase on disk from the RSP.

our student fieldtrips have been life changing for the participants and many of those who have completed their Ph.D.'s and are teaching around the world or are running human rights organisations were first exposed to learning about refugees through this activity.

At Moi University undergraduates formed the Refugee Welfare Club, organised a bicycle race to Mombassa to raise awareness of refugee problems and funds for scholarships.³ This club has continued and Moi graduate members are now employed by UNHCR and NGOs. Names of Oxford students you will know from the literature included Ken Wilson, Alex de Waal, Alula Pankhurst, Joanne McGregor, Richard Black, Claudina Skran, but there were scores of others. For example, Effie Voutira, David Keen, Tim Allen, Mark Walkup - have all significantly contributed to pushing forward the theoretical frontiers of refugee studies.

When we began the RSP, most who conducted research on refugees did them as one-off projects and then went on, or back, to their main topics of interest. One of the major challenges for a rising academic institution working on refugees was the critical rehabilitation of the basic concepts. There was an uncritical use and recycling of agency terminology by consultants who signed away their academic freedom to publish. Publishing one's work is still a challenge for those who accept funds from certain UN bodies.⁴ Worse still, most of such studies continue to remain in the archives of organisations. *We were determined to retain our academic independence.* Early on we managed to win the confidence of the World Food Programme in the credibility of our findings. *Political Pawns* was published in 1989 from a study by Josephine Reynell for WFP and we continued to do research for this UN body right up to 1996. David Keen's *Refugees: Rationing the Right to Life*, was published in 1992 following a conference we held in 1991 which looked at the nutritional crisis among refugees.

Another problem - there was no focus for publishing multi-disciplinary work on refugees and, as continues to be the case, almost no comparative work. In fact, when we started the *Journal of Refugee Studies* (JRS), the majority of the papers submitted were on Vietnamese refugees by US or Canadian academics. For the first years, Dr. Zetter, the founding editor of the *JRS*, had a tough time maintaining a global and multi-disciplinary perspective. It is appropriate to salute Roger as most responsible for the academic standards that have been achieved in our field. As anyone who has had a paper rejected will have experienced, Roger invests an enormous amount of time commenting and encouraging writers in the revision of their work.

How were we thinking about refugee studies as a field of academic enquiry at the time? Refugee studies is multi-disciplinary and we must all endeavour become 'inter-disciplinary'. In short, the challenge of understanding situations where a population is under extreme stress is that it requires the application of coherent and integrated research strategies and a combination of skills which incorporate the knowledge, methods, theories and concepts of a number of disciplines. The problem is not a lack of theory, as some would argue, it was (and too often still is) the problem of *ignorance* of the work from

³ This race caught the imagination of the Permanent Secretary of Home Affairs, who drove his Mercedes along side the racers to protect them from jackals and lions! As Professor Okumu will testify, this support from the Government has been vital to establishing the Centre at Moi in its early days of inception.

⁴ See Harrell-Bond, B.E. and E. Voutira, 'Further thoughts on Academic Consultancy', in *Oxford Magazine*. Eighth Week, Trinity Term, 1993.

other disciplines. For example, it is not possible, whatever your discipline, to do credible research in this field without understanding the specificity of the law applying to persons of different statuses. It is also necessary for everyone working in this field to have a firm grasp of the role of international organisations and the myriad of other actors which deliver relief programmes.

As I have seen it, the major academic contribution which multi-disciplinary research among populations in crises can make is to provide the basis for rethinking concepts, theories, research methodologies and praxis within the disciplines while, at the same time, breaking down the artificial semantic/theoretical divisions between them.⁵ In this sense, the study of refugees can be the powerful counter example, a corrective device in every discipline. This challenge has been put to anthropologists by John Davis in his 'Anthropology of Suffering' in which he attacks the false division between applied and mainstream anthropology, arguing for a unified 'anthropology of suffering'.⁶

Another issue has been how to incorporate all of the different categories of uprooted people. As Roger Zetter's own work has pointed out, *labels do matter*.⁷ Since the beginning of the 1980s, we have seen the proliferation of *separate* literatures on internally displaced, *oustees*, refugees, 'environmental refugees', and so on, but unfortunately, these literatures have not been 'communicating' with each other.⁸ However, as Effie Voutira and I have argued, a major obstacle to a reciprocal transfer of lessons learned from refugee and oustee settlement experience is not conceptual, it is *institutional*.⁹

There are separate bureaucracies operating under separate budgets which are responsible for these two categories of displaced and a radical division of labour between them. Moreover, they each define their roles and their relationships vis-à-vis the host and the donor states differently. They function under different legal/regulatory regimes, and, most significantly, now promote incompatible long-term objectives as to what constitutes a 'successful' solution for the particularly beneficiary populations.

My own research as an anthropologist has played *some* role in the direction which subsequent research has taken in this field, not *only* at the RSP. That study, the first independent evaluation of an emergency assistance programme, was written with the aim of exposing this new field to other academics. Like many others, my interest developed 'accidentally' after many years of research in Britain and West Africa.¹⁰ In 1981, I had

⁵ Harrell-Bond, B.E. and Voutira, E. (1992) 'Anthropology and the study of refugees', *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 6-12.

⁶ Davis, J. (1992) 'The anthropology of suffering'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* vol. 5 (2), pp. 149-161.

⁷ Zetter, R. (1991) 'Labelling Refugees: Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4:1:39-42.

⁸ Hansen, A. (1996) 'Future directions in the Study of forced migration', Keynote address presented at the 5th International Research and Advisory Panel Conference on Forced Migration, Centre for Refugee Studies, Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya, 99-12 April.

⁹ See Harrell-Bond, B.E. and E. Voutira (1998) 'Refugees and *Ouste*s: Competing or complementary concepts? The Challenges of Resettlement' and Voutira, E. and B.E. Harrell-Bond (1998), 'Successful' Refugee Settlement: Are Past Experiences Relevant?' (in press and available in manuscript form from the RSP library).

¹⁰ For example, Hirschon R., 1989, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe; The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus*, Clarendon Press, Oxford and Hansen, A. (1982) 'Self-settled rural refugees in Africa: the case of

visited the Saharawi camps in Algeria. In preparation, I depended mainly on unpublished literature produced by NGOs, none of which prepared me for what I observed. There were no humanitarian organisations working in their settlements, no 'experts' organising aid for them. Although surviving under the extreme conditions of the Sahara desert, there I found people actively using their time in exile to prepare themselves to be part of a 20th Century state.

It was during discussions with OXFAM that one staff member said of their emergency relief work, 'We are so busy saving lives that by the time we get time to *think*, we have made so many mistakes that it is too late'. I became curious as to how humanitarian organisations operate in an emergency and hypothesised that one of the main problems of refugees is their 'helpers', or perhaps better put, the manner in which refugees are helped.

When I planned my research on refugees, it was well-known at the time that most refugees lived outside camps and were *not* assisted. Chambers had written his 'What the eye doth not see' article which high-lighted their plight and whom he assumed then were much worse off than those in camps. Despite my experiences the year before in Algeria, or perhaps because of them, my original research proposal not only did not question UNHCR's settlement approach, it specifically aimed at examining how UNHCR could become more efficient and how the administration of camps could be more 'participatory', humane and less wasteful. My fairly naive idea at the time was that if we could just get the approach in the camps right, then we would also be in a better position to address the problems of the larger numbers of unassisted refugees.

Systematic research led not only to a change of mind, but also later to a change in heart. I came to see and argue with a certain degree of passion that I was wrong - about both humanitarian aid and about camps. I even experienced personally the perverse effects of the perceptions of the helpers of the sense of absolute 'power' over other people. It can absolutely take one over in a desperate refugee situation where you represent access to resources. That is why I wrote my 'confession', the addendum to Chapter 2. Effie Voutira and I have also written about this problem of power in our 'In search of the locus of trust'¹¹

Contrary to what I had expected, the research showed that in many ways those living *outside* the umbrella of assistance were actually 'better off' than those living under it. In terms of the enjoyment of their rights and physical protection, this was dramatically the case. In many cases, even the standard of living the two groups were able to achieve was strikingly different. In fact, in times of crisis, for example, when World Food Programme's lorries got stuck in the mud, it was the self-settled refugees who were feeding many of those who were living in the camps! Certainly relationships between the hosts and the refugees were much more peaceful outside the camps than with those living in them. The hypothesis of the book was that too often the approach of humanitarians makes their assistance in fact a liability rather than an asset. Using participatory methods

Angolans in Zambian villages' in Hansen & Smith (eds.) *Involuntary migration and resettlement: the problems and responses of dislocated people* Westview Press: 13-35.

¹¹ Voutira, E. and B.E. Harrell-Bond 1995. 'In Search of the locus of trust: the social world of the refugee camp', in (eds.) Daniel, E. Valentine and John Chr. Knudsen, *Mistrusting Refugees*, University of California Press, Berkeley: 207-224.

of an anthropologist allowed me to document the negative impact of aid on both refugees and their hosts, and thus de-mythologise it.

As we have learned, engaging in de-mythologising such a sacred arena as humanitarian work, or questioning the power relations between refugees and the people who want to believe that everything they do is humanitarian, is a 'hazardous activity'. When my book was published in 1986, I was surprised to discover it was being interpreted by some as a broadside against humanitarians. However, the vision of the RSP continues to be based on the belief that independent research which actually brings the voices of the beneficiaries into the equation provides those who are employed in this field an opportunity to reflect and change. I am very pleased that research on the culture and impact of humanitarian agencies is *the* growth area in refugee studies. *Refugees are not a metaphysical issue* although their study may entail all sorts of ontological questions.

The aim from the beginning was to link research with practice. The RSP has always maintained that people who work in this field require training and have offered short courses for government officials and the staff of humanitarian organisations. The RSP's foundation course has served as a conversion course for graduates to prepare themselves for research degrees in their own disciplines and we also claim it to be essential learning for those who want to make their careers in humanitarian work. Because of the learning which they gain from one another, we have always tried to keep a mix of persons with these different objectives

'Refugee participation' has always been much more than rhetoric at the RSP. Unless researchers keep in close touch with the multiple dimensions of the experience of the people we study, our work is unlikely to inform policy makers, much less give voice to what is perhaps the most powerless category of people in our world today.¹²

Other actors which research must consider are the host governments' and the host populations' response to the arrival of refugees. When I arrived in the Sudan, I was struck by the way foreign organisations had taken over the role of the 'host'. Human rights organisations did not thrive under colonialism, so there was no natural constituency (or what might be termed today, organisations of civil society) in the country to be concerned with the rights of refugees or take action when these were abrogated. Refugees represent a human rights issue *par excellence*. Yet, it is only in this decade that Amnesty and other human rights organisation have taken up *refugees* as an issue of their concern. *Are not universities a place where the inculcation of principles of social justice should begin?*

Moreover, advocacy work should be based on sound empirical research: the RSP has always sought to work closely with human rights organisations and to provide them with these kind of data. Let us not forget the need for the education of the public (at all levels). Indeed, receiving refugees affects all the institutions of a society. Universities have an important role to play in combating xenophobia and racism, which is a growing problem *throughout the world*. As Kenya's recent post-election experience has shown, 'ethnic

¹² Informally, the RSP has always provided refugees with information through the library and referred them to NGOs which provide advice. Oxfordshire is the 'home' to one of the Home Office's infamous centres of detention and our students are encouraged to visit detained refugees. The RSP has been able to support a small number of refugees to study or conduct research.

cleansing' is a disease not limited to the Former Yugoslavia! In our public educational endeavours, journalists are also an important group to target.

Making sure that students are exposed to different perspectives on a problem has also been the aim of the RSP. Taking a non-partisan approach, while holding a strongly human rights position, is a serious challenge to certain 'interests' and prejudices within and outside universities. All refugees are products of highly polarised political situations, they always touch someone's raw nerves. Sadly, not even at Oxford, have all academics been immunised against the subjectivity of their personal politics. The Palestinians and the Sudanese are cases in point, but there were many others.

It is in relation to this aspect of our vision at the RSP that I want to give most credit to the *tradition* which the University of Oxford represents. Whether or not deserved, Oxford is known in the world as a place of 'detached' scholarship. As a result, we have never had problems with government representation. At one two week human rights course in 1986 we had representatives from Somalia, Sudan *and* Eritrean refugees in attendance. At the same meeting, a Rwandese refugee interpreted for the government officials from his country of origin and Burundi, his host! We held the first public meeting at which Moroccans attended *with* Saharawi refugees.

DEFINING THE FIELD OF REFUGEE STUDIES

The challenge for the RSP was creating a programme of research and teaching in a field not yet explicitly defined. The bare essentials were clearly law, psychology and anthropology. What was the rationale for these disciplines? Given that forced migration involves the unwilling confrontation of 'cultures' and the organising of diversity, it is unnecessary to argue that students from all disciplines will benefit from knowledge of basic anthropological concepts. Moreover, it is from anthropologists that we get the basic texts in the field of refugee studies, starting with Colson's *The Social Consequences of Resettlement* and Hansen and Oliver Smith's *Involuntary Migration and Resettlement*.¹³

Methodology, as taught at the RSP, emphasises anthropological methods as a crucial part of *all* researchers' arsenal. In saying this, however, we *do not* encourage researchers simply to *become anthropologists*, rather to adopt an *anthropological stance* in their studies of other nationalities, their interactions in refugee situations and their studies of organisational culture.¹⁴

While the subject goes far beyond my time, it is important to admit that generally *there are many anthropological 'wrongs' which need to be put right*. Some of these wrongs become even more evident in refugee studies. For example, one can wonder whether and to what extent anthropology's conventional concentration on 'tribes', ethnic groups, cultural differences and 'material culture' has contributed to the ideology of ethnic

¹³ Harrell-Bond, B.E. and Voutira, E. 1992. 'Anthropology and the Study of Refugees' *Anthropology Today* Vol.8 No.4:6-10.

¹⁴ e.g. Voutira E. and Harrell-Bond, B.H.B. (1995) 'In Search of the Locus of Trust: The Social World of the Refugee Camp' in Daniel, E. and J. Knudsen, eds. *(Mis)Trusting Refugee Narratives*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Hyndman, M. Jennifer (1997) 'Refugee Self-Management and the Question of Governance', *Refuge*, Vol. 16, No. 2:16-22.

cleansing?¹⁵ Another issue relates the right of refugees to maintain their 'culture', but what does this mean? Since anthropologists themselves hardly agree on a definition of culture, it is not surprising that popular understandings of the concept vary widely and that appeals to 'cultural sensitivity' have been grossly misinterpreted in practice.

Although few anthropologists today would admit to being cultural relativists, *cultural relativism*, as Effie Voutira will argue here, has had the unintended consequence of resulting in the post modern phenomenon of 'the new racism'. A 'rights' approach requires researchers *and* humanitarian to equip themselves to be able to distinguish between those aspects of a culture which are functional and those that are dysfunctional, especially those which are at variance with human rights. This must be especially the case for those concerned with the rights and welfare of women.

I have just attended a UN/NGO conference in Kigali on women's rights to land and property. The transformations which are being called for would completely redefine the family in Africa. Anthropologists could have been the leaders in such an analysis, but instead most of us were uncritically setting *our peoples'* 'kinship systems' in stone. In the now 'globalised' market economy, the persistence of these so-called hierarchical 'customary' family systems, with their rules of inheritance and succession, deny women, especially refugee women, the rights required even for the sheer survival of themselves and their children.

And why law? How does the study of forced migrants differ from *voluntary* migrants (a distinction which in today's world of extreme economic inequity is more and more difficult to make)? A fundamental difference is their legal status. In terms of academic publication, law was the discipline best developed but what is *still lacking* are ongoing field studies on the extent to which those affected enjoy their rights.¹⁶

Why should the psychological dimensions be an essential part of the curriculum in refugee studies? What we know from post Second World War research is that although all people enjoy their fundamental right to the *freedom* of movement, being *forced* to move has a long term negative impact on mental health outcomes, both at the onset and over the long-term. The problem is that since these excellent epidemiological studies were made, there has been a dearth of research on which to base interventions and *none* to evaluate their impact.¹⁷ Most current literature is derived from studies by psychiatrists in the West to whom persons suffering symptoms of what are presumed to be the traumas of uprooting are referred.

As a consequence, it has been extremely difficult for the RSP to provide adequate comparative research-based teaching of this topic; the problems have been complicated by the rise in the fashion which asserts that *all* uprooted people are suffering 'post traumatic'

¹⁵ At the conference, War, Exile and Everyday Life, organised by the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia, 30 March-2 April 1995, three retired professors made very moving statements about how in the midst of the war they had come to appreciate how their work had contributed to the ideology of differences between the various 'imagined communities' of the Former Yugoslavia.

¹⁶ The RSP is currently engaged in such field studies in Uganda and Kenya.

¹⁷ Ager, Alistair (1993) 'Mental health issues in refugee populations: a review', Project on International Mental and Behavioural Health, Harvard Medical School, Department of Social Medicine, RSP Library. This document, a review of the literature and the state-of-the-art of knowledge in this field is a valuable tool.

disorders.¹⁸ Recently, the Andrew Mellon Foundation made a grant to the RSP to develop a multi-media interactive course on psycho-social issues in order to consolidate its teaching and to assist other universities to offer this essential core course. There remains, however, a profound absence of comparative field-based exploratory cross-cultural research in this important area.

The curriculum of refugee studies has broadened to include other disciplines. Human rights are indivisible and begin with the right to life, so learning the principles of nutrition is essential. Essential learning we believe also includes the multi-disciplinary study of refugee/displaced livelihoods and certainly of humanitarian organisations.

Adequate library resources are the foundation. The RSP's library is open to all comers but the problem has also been, 'How to make this collection *accessible* around the world so that other university programmes were not so dependent on the RSP at Oxford?' Thanks to the Mellon Foundation, we now have a digital library project on stream. The digitisation project is very important because it makes the RSP at Oxford less important.

In fact, in 1982, when a centre at Oxford was originally mooted, I resisted the idea. From the beginning, I believed that such an institution belonged in the countries most affected by refugees.¹⁹ I approached individuals at Juba University and out of these conversations, the Juba Centre for Refugee Studies was born. With such enthusiasm, unsupported by adequate libraries and trained staff, I realised that there was a need for a northern institution to support this initiative. Moreover, the world of refugees is global and there should be such centres everywhere. *So long as the RSP kept this vision and its integrity, I believed that there was justification for developing a centre in Oxford.*

Some 16 years later, there are research and teaching programmes in several countries including: Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Morocco, Palestine; and Jordan. A proposal has been put for funding to develop a master's degree at Wits University. In the US, the Andrew Mellon Foundation has funded Columbia and Tufts to develop new teaching/research programmes in refugee studies. There is a network of six European universities offering a master's degree in 'humanitarian aid' for which the RSP has contributed to three of the basic texts.

Refugee studies are also being integrated into new disciplines. Next year, Columbia will offer a master's degree in health and forced migration. In 1997, the Association of the Institutes and Schools of Tropical Medicine in Europe, a network of 17 institutions, met to plan for including the health needs of refugees/displaced populations in a new master's level course in 'International Health'. And there is no doubt that there will be more universities where refugee studies will flourish. At Makerere University, I have just learned from the Dean of Social Sciences, Professor Sengendo, that a series of titles in the social science course lists have been inserted so that, as he put it, 'When we *do* have

¹⁸ See Summerfield, D. (1991) 'The rise of post-traumatic stress disorders [letter]' *British Medical Journal* vol.303:1271; Summerfield, D. (1997) 'The Legacy of War: Beyond trauma to the social fabric', *The Lancet* Vol.349:1568; Summerfield, D. and F. Hume (1993) 'War and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: The Question of Social Context', *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 181:522.

¹⁹ Perhaps I forgot that Britain also hosts refugees and it certainly could not have predicted how relevant our work would be to the problems of Europe, especially after the Berlin Wall collapsed.

someone who can teach them, the bureaucracy of introducing new courses on refugees will not be an obstacle’.

So, although we in the network of pioneers in refugee studies have not managed to ‘work ourselves out of a job’ in the sense of eliminating the problem of forced migration in the world, we have massively shifted the thinking *about refugees* and we have also been successful in another way because the centre of gravity of this new academic field has now been shifted from the North to the South.

In 1996, at a conference at Moi University, the Independent Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) was launched as a new professional organisation for academics and practitioners. Myron Weiner gave the opening address.²⁰ IASFM grew out of a series of conferences, organised at the RSP as the International Research and Advisory Panel (IRAP). IASFM’s existence, independent of the RSP, suggests that the new academic field of refugee studies has been truly launched. The next bi-annual conference (which keeps the name IRAP) will be held in Gaza, Palestine, 12-16 December, 1998. The local sponsor is the Gaza Community Mental Health Centre. I hope that everyone here will support this new professional organisation by joining it and that we will have the opportunity to meet again there this December.

Dr. Barbara E. Harrell-Bond
22 March 1998

²⁰ The Chair of IASFM is Professor Art Hansen, University of Florida; Dr. Wolfgang Bosswick is the Secretary, and Dr. Loes Van Willigan, the Treasurer.