

Refugee Livelihoods Network (RLN) March 2006

In This Issue:

- [Participatory Livelihood Approaches](#)
- [Key publications and reports:](#)
- [Participation in Planning, Managing and Evaluating Humanitarian Aid: the case of Sri Lanka](#)
- [Lessons from Conflict: A participatory review of a Ugandan refugee project](#)
- [Youth Speaks out: New voices on the protection and participation of young people affected by armed conflict](#)
- [Protection through participation: Young people affected by forced migration and political crisis](#)
- [Learning and Good Practice](#)
- [Mbeleni Foundation](#)

Featured Links:

- [Participatory techniques for community-based programme development: Trainer's Manual and Participant's Handbook](#)
- [Participation, Power and Social Change Team, IDS](#)
- [Participation Resource Centre](#)
- [Eldis Participation Resource Guide](#)

Participatory Livelihood Approaches

The need for the participation of populations assisted by international humanitarian action in measures supporting them is now widely accepted. Yet, despite clear institutional commitments in practice participatory approaches seem difficult to implement and there remains wide variation between the level of participation in project development, implementation and evaluation. This RLN issue brings together some of the major sources on participation and participatory techniques in general, as well as discussing relevant research on participatory approaches to programming and evaluation of refugee livelihoods.

Over the last few months, the RLN moderator has worked on a special issue of the Refugee Survey Quarterly (RSQ) on refugee livelihoods. This RSQ special issue will be available from June 2006, containing a number of very interesting articles on the livelihoods of IDPs, refugees in regional camps, urban refugees, returnees and resettled refugees. Furthermore, it contains an introductory article which presents a state-of-the-art overview on refugee livelihoods based on academic literature as well as on the RLN.

This RSQ issue is meant to be the final product of the Refugee Livelihoods Project, with the last newsletter appearing in May. RLN will close down due to internal changes within UNHCR's evaluation function, limited input from subscribers, and because the need to mainstream livelihoods into academic and policy-work has by now been widely acknowledged. It may be time to take analysis and practice to a next level, and we wish to invite our subscribers to give their views on this: Do you agree with this observation, and if so, do you have suggestions of ways forward in improving the ability of refugees to develop sustainable livelihoods? In the next issues, your contributions will be discussed and findings from the RSQ issue will be presented. Also, various general links, key publications and projects on refugee livelihoods will be included. You can send your views and relevant material to the moderator, Cindy Horst, at Ref.Net@inter.NL.net.

[Click here for the recent UNHCR paper 'Refugee livelihoods. A review of the Evidence'](#)

Key publications and reports:

Participatory and Beneficiary-based approaches to the evaluation of humanitarian programmes

This UNHCR Working Paper by Tania Kaiser seeks to assess the extent to which refugee and humanitarian agencies have used participatory and beneficiary based methodologies in their evaluation processes. A review of numerous guidelines for evaluation and analyses of best practice in the humanitarian field demonstrate that there is increasing interest in the use of such methodologies amongst donors, UN and other international organizations and NGOs. A review of recent evaluation reports and consultations with evaluators and agency employees,

however, suggests that the best practice which is proposed has not yet become common practice. Besides this general overview, Tania Kaiser has written various case studies on participation. See, for example, 'Participation, self-reliance and integration. Sudanese refugees in Uganda', <http://www.id21.org/insights/insights44/insights-iss44-art04.html>. This paper analyses whether the structure of the humanitarian aid framework facilitates the use of participatory approaches. Research suggests that the available participatory space is very small partly because of the constraints of working in a conflict area, but relates also to the rigidity of agency systems and procedures, and the attitudes and understanding of key field staff.

[Click here to link to this UNHCR Working Paper](#)

Participation in Planning, Managing and Evaluating Humanitarian Aid: the case of Sri Lanka

Testing the hypothesis that the active consultation and participation of crisis-affected populations in measures to assist them is both feasible and beneficial in terms of project outcome, this report investigates current policy and field practice in three locations affected by conflict in the north and east of Sri Lanka. The authors, Jo Boyden et al., suggest that consultation and the timely provision of accurate information on critical issues is greatly valued by beneficiaries and is a must in all circumstances. From the point of view of aid recipients, consultation and information provision are the means by which beneficiaries can gain a greater sense of control over their lives. Assuming that the environmental conditions are sufficiently conducive, aid implementers have the appropriate skills and capacity, donors are supportive and aid recipients view the idea favourably, more active and meaningful participation is also feasible within the field of humanitarian action. However, it has to be recognised that the employment of more participatory approaches presents many challenges.

[Click here to view this INTRAC paper](#)

Lessons from Conflict: A participatory review of a Ugandan refugee project

A paper by Koos Neefjes, published by the Humanitarian Practice Network, reports on a participatory evaluation of a humanitarian project in Uganda. The report has valuable lessons for other participatory reviews of refugee resettlement schemes. In particular, the participatory nature of the review created unrealistic expectations among stakeholders with regard to the future role of the NGOs involved. Furthermore, the review process challenged ideas concerning objective truth. Received wisdom that one can objectively attribute measurable livelihood improvements to particular actions proved controversial. The idea of agreed immutable indicators of success was challenged. In fact, it was shown that in participatory and conflictual processes, predetermined impact indicators or even broad indicator themes must be handled with great care. Problems occurred because the review team was large and ran the risk of accumulating an unmanageable amount of information from

which no consensus could arise. Besides, time was a limiting factor: human and other resources were diverted from day-to-day project activities and donors were impatient for results.

[Click here to access this ID21 report](#)

Youth Speakes out: New voices on the protection and participation of young people affected by armed conflict

This paper by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children provides an overview of the problems and challenges young people face during and after armed conflict and also offers youth-driven solutions for addressing these problems. The report draws on participatory research conducted by more than 150 adolescents in Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone. Young people interviewed their peers about a range of issues to answer questions, such as what are the main problems of adolescents in your society? What are some solutions to these problems? Some of the main concerns identified by young people across conflicts include the threats of violence and physical insecurity, psychosocial difficulties and a range of socio-economic development problems, in particular the lack of educational opportunities. Girls on average faced greater challenges than boys in securing support for their rights. Young people identified a number of instructive and promising programmes and solutions, including education and skills training; participation; information sharing; support in developing life skills and constructive relationships with adults and peers; and the creation of safe spaces.

[Click here for this Women's Commission report](#)

Protection through participation: Young people affected by forced migration and political crisis

This RSC Working Paper by J. Newman suggests that evidence of young people's resilience and competence has radical implications for the way the international community responds to young people affected by forced migration and armed conflict. It challenges the legitimacy and effectiveness of emergency interventions that act on behalf of young people rather than with them, and argues that many protection failures have been the result of policy and practice only loosely constructed around young people's own perspectives, priorities and realities. Engaging young people as active participants requires treating their views as a source of strength and allowing them to educate us about problems and solutions of which we may be unaware. It also implies the need to devise appropriate ways for young people to be involved in mechanisms related to the design, management and implementation of protection solutions. We need to ask what young people can do to contribute to their own well-being and how we can encourage their participation in determining protection measures. The fear is that unless we involve young people in constructive measures for building a safer society, their energies and initiative will instead be exploited by those who would do them harm.

[Click here to read this RSC Working Paper](#)

Learning and Good Practice

FORGE, Facilitating Opportunities for Refugee Growth and Empowerment, was founded in 2003 by students who felt they had more to offer than the traditional avenues are prepared to accept. With a severe lack of effective channels for their energy, assets, and abilities, the vast resource base of university students all too often goes unrealized and untapped. FORGE exists to transform this by creating a space for diverse youth to connect, collaborate, and innovate in response to a common cause - and by providing them with the tools and training to do so effectively. FORGE not only delivers sustainable immediate impact in refugee communities, but also empowers leaders of the future and unites them in pursuit of their vision. In the Ambassador programme, students partner with refugees and the local community to ensure that projects are locally-tailored, sustainable, and serve to develop leadership amongst the refugee youth. The Advocacy Program works to raise public awareness and strengthen political will so as to transform global inequality. Recognizing that true change must start at home, the Advocacy Program seeks to raise public awareness of critical global issues and build up the political resolve to address them. Through grassroots campaigns and events, FORGE Advocates seek to personalize and humanize the experience of extreme poverty and marginalization so often faced by refugees.

[Click here to learn more about this young organization](#)

Mbeleni Foundation

The Mbeleni Foundation works to improve the educational experiences of refugee children and the children with whom they live while in exile. Through research, advocacy, and action the Foundation seeks to promote the kind of education that will help refugees rebuild the lives of their families and communities. Currently, Mbeleni is organizing the auctioning of the paintings of Daniel Zilahirwa. Daniel is a Mbeleni Scholar who now lives in Winnipeg, Canada. He and his family were resettled very recently from Uganda where they lived as refugees from Democratic Republic of Congo. Daniel is a fabulous artist who has decided to offer four of his paintings in support of the Mbeleni Foundation. Any amount over US\$40 will go toward the support of school fees for Daniel's schoolmates in Kampala. Furthermore, Daniel will use the money he makes to help support himself through art school in Canada. Please contact Sarah at sarah_dryden@post.harvard.edu if you would like to place a bid on a painting; please be sure to specify which painting. The minimum bid is \$40 and the auction will close on May 1, 2006.

[To read more on the Foundation and view the paintings, click here](#)

The Refugee Livelihoods Network is an initiative of UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit. (EPAU) The views expressed by contributors to the Network and in documents electronically linked to the Network are not those of UNHCR. For issues other than refugee livelihoods, EPAU can be contacted by e-mail at hqep00@unhcr.org