

Institution: City University London
Unit of Assessment: 21 Politics and International Studies
Title of case study: Asylum, Displacement and Involuntary Resettlement – Influencing Policy and Evaluation and Improving Evidence
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Through engagement by Ministerial invitation as a member of successive UK Government advisory groups on Country Information (IAGCI) from 2007 to 2013 and based on expertise arising from research conducted at City University London, Dr Christopher McDowell has contributed to the acknowledged improvement in the quality of asylum decision-making. He has guided the UK Home Office Country of Origin Information Services (COIS) in developing academically-rigorous research and review procedures. The adopted methodology based on his research has contributed to the generation of more accurate, up to date and fully referenced human rights information that forms the basis of the legal determination of asylum and human rights claims. The United Nations, the UK's Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency and the British Red Cross agree that as a result of the work of the IAGCI the UK now has the most accountable and robust Country Information system in the EU, achieving fairer decisions and providing a model which is likely to be replicated across EU member states.</p> <p>In recognition of his expertise on the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of involuntary resettlement occurring as a result of infrastructure development projects and land acquisition, Dr McDowell has also led or participated in several international evaluations of shelter and resettlement operations; and made recommendations for improvement in policy and practice. This includes his engagement as an International Resettlement Specialist by the Inspection Panel (IP) of The World Bank to investigate the social and resettlement aspects of a highly-controversial, multimillion dollar landfill project in Accra, Ghana. As a result of this engagement, The World Bank, accepting the IP's findings that both the pre-construction impact studies and community consultations with residents were insufficient, froze the project loan, enabling time for full consultations and impact assessments. The investigation resulted in an important new World Bank requirement that comprehensive Zone of Impact Assessments are undertaken in all future projects as part of loan preparations.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Improving Quality of Country Information and Public Debate in Asylum Decision-Making: From 2005 to 2008, while Head of the Information Centre for Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) at City University London, Dr Christopher McDowell (employed at City since 2005, now Reader) led several research projects which examined key dimensions of asylum in the UK and Europe. They included an examination of the impact of dispersed asylum seekers in towns in the UK Midlands, the provision of legal advice to failed asylum seekers in detention, media reporting on asylum in the UK press and public attitudes towards asylum. He received in excess of £250,000 in research funding from the UK Home Office, the Greater London Authority, The Law Society and foundations including The Sigrid Rausing Trust and the Camelot Foundation.</p> <p>Improving Accountability and 'Safeguards' in Involuntary Resettlement: Since 2007, Dr McDowell has also undertaken substantial research in Central Asia, South Asia and Ghana on the nature of livelihood risks associated with the involuntary resettlement of populations as a result of land acquisition and land and asset loss in the development process. The research has generated two co-authored books on development and displacement; they examine policy responses, the impoverishment process and in-depth oral history studies from Africa and Asia over two generations. In addition, Dr McDowell proposed a Sustainable Livelihoods and Impoverishment Risks model that has guided three PhD research projects undertaken at other universities on the</p>

impoverishment process. The research led to a commissioned study of future policy strategy for the Norwegian Government and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in Geneva (2005-2007).

3. References to the research

Asylum

- MacKenzie C., McDowell C., & Pittaway E. (2007). [Beyond “Do No Harm”: The Challenge of Constructing Ethical Relationships in Refugee Research](#). *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(2), 299-319.

Evidence of Quality: OUP list the above as the third most cited (82 citations) article published by the *Journal of Refugee Studies* <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/reports/most-cited>; according to Google matrix JRS is the highest ranked journal in forced migration studies.

- Smart K., Grimshaw R., McDowell, C., & Crosland B. (2007). *Reporting Asylum: The UK Press and the Effectiveness of PCC Guidelines*. London: ICAR/City University London.

Evidence of Quality: Report cited in evidence submissions to Leveson Inquiry by Runnymede, December 2011, Refugee Council, February 2012; and in written evidence from Oxfam to the Joint Committee on Human Rights, UK Parliament in 2007 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200607/jtselect/jtrights/81/81we72.htm>

Involuntary Resettlement

- Bennett O. & McDowell C. (2012). *Displaced: The Human Costs of Development and Resettlement*, New York: Palgrave.

Evidence of Quality: Winner Edgar Graham Prize 2012; Winner 2012 Cecil B Currey Publication Award, October 13, 2012; cited in ICRC World Disasters Report 2012 (p.145); cited in July 2013 Report to the UN General Assembly of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons (A/HRC/23/44)

- McDowell C. & Morrell G. (2010). *Displacement Beyond Conflict: Challenges for the 21st Century*. Oxford: Berghahn.

McDowell C. (2011). *Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation: Implications for land acquisition and population relocation*. (Working Paper No. 3). London: UK Government's Foresight Project, Global Environmental Migration Programme.

PD22, commissioned review by Global Environmental Migration Programme, UK Government's Foresight Project

Evidence of Quality: The [One Year Review](#) of the Global Environmental Migration Programme for which the paper was commissioned described the Programme as having had 'significant impact with UK and international stakeholders It has influenced the work of DFID [Department for International Development] and that of several international and multinational bodies such as the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank. The Project's methods and findings have found particular resonance with policy-makers, strategic thinkers and research communities from a wide range of stakeholder organisations (Foresight, Government Office for Science, 2013, Executive Summary p.3).

4. Details of the impact

Improving Quality of Country Information and Public Debate in Asylum Decision-Making: Dr McDowell's research on conflict and asylum-migration (the latter term, coined by him, recognises that asylum movements often follow similar patterns to economic migration in decision-making, routes, use of agents and destination countries) has addressed the asylum process in the UK, Europe and Australia as well as return and settlement strategies and asylum diaspora politics. His

reputation as an expert in this area along with his role at ICAR, which became the UK's leading provider of authoritative information on asylum, led to Dr McDowell providing academic oversight of research undertaken by the Asylum and Destitution Working Group of the UK Centre for Social Justice and by the Independent Asylum Commission which reviewed the UK asylum system between October 2006 and July 2008.

He also received a Ministerial invitation to sit on the UK Home Office Advisory Group on Country Information (the IAGCI, subsequently advisory to the Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency). Following two re-invitations, he has served on the IAGCI since 2007 until now and has applied his research knowledge and country expertise on Sri Lanka (a country that has generated significant numbers of displaced people) to improving the quality, timeliness, accuracy and comprehensiveness of human rights information available to decision-makers in the UK Home Office Asylum Division. In association with this role he was commissioned to undertake research into the use of Country Information by asylum case workers, the results of which guided the continuing review of country studies. The UK Border Agency has recognised that the significant improvement in its reports over several years is in large part a result of the work of the IAGCI. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which is represented on the Group, has congratulated the Independent Chief Inspector on the successes of the IAGCI, most notably the improvements in decision quality and fairness of asylum application outcomes.

The main beneficiaries of these activities are the Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency, the UK Home Office, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the European Union's European Asylum Support Office (EASO), asylum case-workers making use of better Country Information and asylum applicants (as a result of improved information guiding decisions on their cases).

McDowell's research on media reporting on asylum was cited widely in submissions to the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture Practice and Ethics of the Press during 2011 and 2012. It had earlier influenced the Mayor of London to initiate annual awards for press reporting on asylum and refugees which ran until 2008.

Improving Accountability and 'Safeguards' in Involuntary Resettlement: Dr McDowell's expertise on development-created displacement and involuntary resettlement has resulted in a series of senior advisory assignments with the major international organisations engaged in resettlement policy and practice. Earlier roles included preparing strategy options for the International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in Geneva to incorporate the dynamic of non-conflict displacement into its international advocacy and information work; and acting as the Senior International Resettlement Specialist on the Asian Development Bank's Technical Assistance missions in China, India and Cambodia, advising governments on policies for impoverishment risk management in the resettlement process. They led to Dr McDowell acting as Social and Resettlement Expert on the World Bank Inspection Panel investigation into the KwaBenya Urban Environmental Sanitation Project in Ghana during 2009 and 2010. The Inspection Panel is an independent complaints mechanism for people who believe they have been, or are likely to be, adversely affected by a World Bank-funded project.

The request for inspection in this case was based on a contention that a highly-controversial, multimillion dollar project for a proposed sanitary landfill site would result in negative pollution and health impacts and would displace residents and artisans working in the affected valley and its surroundings. As a Panel member, Dr McDowell participated in the inspection and advised on social and resettlement aspects of the project in Accra, Ghana. Within this role he undertook investigative research that was fundamental to the Panel's fact-finding efforts and ultimate findings on issues of policy compliance and harm to the affected community. The World Bank accepted the Panel's findings that both the pre-construction impact studies and community consultations with residents were insufficient and froze the project loan, thus enabling time for full consultations and impact assessments. The investigation resulted in an important new Bank requirement that comprehensive Zone of Impact Assessments are undertaken in all future projects as part of loan preparations.

His research findings have contributed to the strengthening of national and international governance through adoption of national resettlement laws and improved Technical Directives and Policies. Beneficiaries also included the immediate population most affected by the proposed landfill site in Ghana.

In 2010 Dr McDowell was commissioned to carry out a study on involuntary resettlement and climate change for the UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser's Foresight Programme (Department of Business, Industry and Skills) which was published in 2011. The [One Year Review](#) of the Global Environmental Migration Programme for which the paper was commissioned described the Programme as having "*significant impact with UK and international stakeholders. It has influenced the work of the DFID and that of several international and multinational bodies such as the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank. The Project's methods and findings have found particular resonance with policy-makers, strategic thinkers and research communities from a wide range of stakeholder organisations.*" (Foresight, Government Office for Science, 2013, p.3).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Invitation letter to reappointment as member of IAGCI, 7th March 2011, Chief Inspector, UK Border Agency

Letter received from the Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency

Letter received from the Executive Secretary, The Inspection Panel of The World Bank, Washington, DC

'Investigation Report: Ghana Second Urban Environmental Sanitation Report (UESP II), The Inspection Panel, Report No.47713-GH, March 13, 2009. Pdf available [here](#).

www.bis.gov.uk/foresight/our-work/projects/published-projects/global-migration/one-year-review.