

Refugee Livelihoods Network (RLN) April 2006

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Refugee Livelihoods

This issue of the RLN provides relevant links and various interesting papers on refugee livelihoods. As you know, next month the last newsletter will be produced and the livelihoods project will be concluded with the publication of a special 'Livelihoods' issue of the Refugee Survey Quarterly in June. In the last newsletter, the content of this RSQ special issue will be discussed, and subscribers' suggestions related to the livelihoods project will be mentioned. One option, besides closing the network down altogether, may be for another institution to take over the project. If your institution is interested, please contact the network moderator as soon as possible. Also, you can send various general links, key publications and projects on refugee livelihoods and your views on the RLN's future to the moderator, Cindy Horst, at Ref.Net@inter.NL.net. Deadline May 27th.

[Click here for UNHCR's 'The State of the World's Refugees 2006'](#)

Key publications and reports:

Food Security Assessment in emergencies: A livelihood approach

This paper by Young et al. describes the theory and practice of Oxfam's livelihoods approach to assessing food security in emergencies. A livelihoods approach simply means emergency programming aimed at supporting livelihoods, as well as saving lives. In terms of food-security assessments, a livelihoods approach involves assessing the longer-term risks to livelihoods, as well as short-term nutritional or lifethreatening risks. The first part of this paper describes the key concepts that make up food-security theory, and relates them to a livelihoods approach. These elements are availability and access to food (entitlement theory) and the severity of food insecurity in relation to meeting food needs, vulnerability, risk and coping strategies. The second part of the paper describes how Oxfam assesses food security. The third part of the paper uses case-studies to illustrate how Oxfam has applied its livelihoods approach in practice, and how that approach has been adapted depending on the types of livelihood in question, and the nature of the external shock. These case-studies include a review of Oxfam's programme for conflict-displaced people in Uraba (Colombia). The paper ends by highlighting the key challenges posed by a livelihoods approach to assessing food security in emergencies.

[Click here to link to this HPN paper](#)

The effects of food aid on household migration patterns and implications for emergency food assessments

This report by Hammond et al. examines migration as it is practiced by people not only as a result of a crisis, but also as a

strategy to reduce vulnerability and maximise income prior to or during a crisis. It proposes guidelines for assessing the role of migration as part of emergency food security assessments (EFSAs), and discusses the programming implications of incorporating migration-sensitive analysis into emergency assessments. Whereas originally analyses of migration were often presented in negative terms, recently there has been growing appreciation of the key part migration can play in rural livelihoods and the fact that many forms of migration are typical features of poor people's lives. In the context of food security assessments, including those in emergency situations, understanding migration's role in a household's overall income is crucial. It is important to find out who migrates; where to; when and how often; and the contribution migration makes to the household's budget. The understanding thus gained should inform how assistance is delivered, where and when, and the appropriate balance between food aid and other responses.

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

Livelihood networks and decision-making among Congolese young people in formal and informal refugee contexts in Uganda

This paper by C. Clark explores Congolese young people's access to decision-making in a variety of household contexts in Kampala and Kyaka II refugee settlement, western Uganda. Refugee youth who are without their biological parents are often assumed to be among the most disempowered members of displaced populations. Using a network approach to household and family, research findings reveal shrinking networks, increasing delinkage between household and family, and a greater importance of households in the refugee context. These changes have resulted in the advent of households headed by young people and composed of young peers, as well as an increasing number of young people who are members of households outside of traditional family networks. Contrary to assumptions in much of the refugee literature, policy and programming, young people in these situations have greater access to decision-making at household, community and policy levels, thus showing that conflict-induced displacement has created opportunities as well as challenges for some refugee young people.

[Click here to access this HICN working paper](#)

Rural Livelihoods at Risk: Land use and coping strategies of war-affected communities in Sri Lanka

Rural societies in war-affected areas experience a dramatic increase in risk and uncertainty. A multi-disciplinary, comparative village study carried out in the war-torn areas of Sri Lanka addressed the question of how this affects land use and agricultural coping strategies of small-scale farm households. The study employed the analytical framework of rural livelihoods promoted by DFID. In addition, theoretical models of risk management were instrumental in illustrating behavioural patterns of households in the war zones. The study shows that changed patterns of mobility are a key response of people to

adjust to the risk-prone environment. These strategies place heavy demands on the extended family network. Furthermore, access to and priority claims for resources are critical in determining differences in livelihood strategies in different communities. Limited accessibility to natural resources due to war restricts the freedom of livelihood options. Many adapting strategies of farm households thus reflect the declining entitlements to resources due to war and violence. Households gradually deplete their capital stock after each political crisis. Investment in sustainable land management is not rational for farm households that are uncertain about future developments affecting the fundamentals of their lives. Households therefore employ risk minimisation strategies to downsize possible losses and focus on cash earning (especially from overseas employment) and/or state welfare for survival.

[This paper can be accessed here](#)

The consequences of conflict: Livelihoods and Development in Nepal

Worsening conflict in Nepal is having a detrimental effect on the lives of the rural poor. As instability undermines existing policies aimed at improving rural livelihoods, development agencies have been slow to respond to the realities of working in a conflict situation. David Seddon and Karim Hussein analyse the way Nepal's ongoing conflict has affected rural livelihoods and development policies and programmes. The authors identify the main livelihood effects of the conflict as being: loss of life and forced migration and consequent loss of income to families; a reduction in travel and the transport of goods as a result of lack of security and disruption of economic activities; destruction by the rebels of local infrastructure; rebel restrictions on moneylenders, informal taxation demands on professionals and rising theft and extortion. Development agencies – both foreign and national – have been reluctant to adapt their approaches to the conflict situation. Increasingly, however, agencies are being forced to change as some activities prove unacceptable to either the rebels or the state security forces. The authors propose a best practice guide for agencies in complex conflict situations which covers principles, assessment methodologies, situational analyses, intervention approaches, livelihood protection and conflict resolution.

[Click here to read this ODI paper](#)

An Exploration of the Livelihood Strategies of Durban Congolese Refugees

This study by Baruti Bahati Amisi investigates Congolese refugees' economic activities in Durban, South Africa, in order to understand why some refugees adapt and integrate in the local economy whereas others fail and migrate to refugee camps outside South Africa. The author uses the concept of social exclusion to understand refugee action, and highlights the importance of social networks as a form of social capital among refugees. Quantitative data revealed that Congolese refugees are skilled and form a heterogeneous group from various viewpoints. Their survival is based on a wide range of economic activities in both the informal and the formal economy. Income is

also generated via the transfer of monies between Durban and other South African Cities, and between South Africa and other countries. Qualitative data further revealed that social networks are key to their livelihood strategies. These social networks may be positive or negative. Social exclusion, exploitation and xenophobia are the main problems that Congolese refugees face on a daily basis. Xenophobia is a result of perceived or real competition over scarce resources. Mistrust is common in this community for numerous reasons and represents a permanent threat and source of community fragmentation. The proliferation of small churches, ethnical political parties and self-help projects is symptomatic of this fragmentation.

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

Upcoming Events

A call for papers has been sent out for an international conference on 'Poverty Reduction in Conflict and Fragile States: Perspectives from a Household Level'. The conference will be held in Washington D.C. on 14-15 November 2006, and the deadline for sending in papers is June 12th. The international donor community has called for the halving of global poverty by 2015. An increasing challenge to meeting this goal is reaching the poor in conflict and fragile states. While a significant body of knowledge exists on the interconnectedness of poverty and conflict, few studies analyse the links between conflict and state fragility on the one hand and state fragility and poverty on the other hand. Furthermore, little research on the inter-relatedness of these dynamics has been done at the micro-economic level. USAID's Office of Poverty Reduction (PR), the Households in Conflict Network (HiCN) and the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin) plan to co-sponsor a two-day international conference on the special challenge of poverty reduction in conflict and fragile states. Examining the relationship between conflict and state fragility at the household level provides an opportunity to understand how these factors affect household behavior, welfare and poverty. This, in turn, is important for shaping successful programmatic and policy responses. The conference will target researchers, development practitioners, and policy-makers engaged in these issues. It is hoped that the mix of academic and experiential papers to be presented will help reduce knowledge gaps in these areas and advance both research and practice on this theme. The organisers also hope to promote increased collaboration between international researchers through this conference.

[To read more on this conference, click here](#)