

Module 9: Background Reading on Partnerships

We were unable to identify any readings directly related to partnership with refugees led organisations and other stakeholders. However, we found this article interesting because, while focusing on academic partnerships, it highlights the many problems which can also be experienced in partnerships where the two potential partners have uneven access to resources, information and power.

Beyond the Partnership Debate: Localizing Knowledge Production in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies Richa Shivakoti, James Milner. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 35, Issue 2, June 2022, Pages 805–826, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feab083>

Abstract. “There is a growing recognition in refugee and forced migration studies that research partnerships, especially those that cross geographies of the global North and global South, are both a blessing and a potential curse. They are a blessing as they encourage new approaches to the co-creation of knowledge, build solidarity networks, and leverage support for scholars based in the global South. But they can also be a curse as they typically function within and can inadvertently reproduce deeply embedded structures of inequality. Drawing on the results of a review of forced displacement research centres based in the global South and interviews with the directors of these centres, this article encourages a shift from focusing on research partnerships to an approach that supports the localization of knowledge production in refugee and forced migration studies. This approach seeks to change the structures of knowledge production, including direct funding to researchers and research centres based in the global South, an emphasis on the transfer of power to researchers in the South, a recognition of the diverse forms and sources of knowledge produced within the field, and an appreciation for the diverse understandings of success and impact across contexts.”

A broad range of RLO, NGO and academic partners from have produced guidelines which address many of the concerns discussed in this article. They are:

[Guidelines for Co-produced Research with Refugees and Other People with Lived Experience of Displacement](#)



To enable broad engagement with the Guidelines, [an international consultation process](#) was conducted between November 2022 and May 2023. This process was facilitated by Tristan Harley from the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at the University of New South Wales and Najeeba Wazefadost from the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees, and was supported by Act for Peace.

How we have approached partnership in this project

We looked at the Global Compact on Refugees which refers to *Partners and Stakeholders* and asked “Who are they”? They are potentially everyone who is working to improve the protection of refugees:

- Refugees themselves
- Local NGOs
- International NGOs

- UN agencies
- All donors
- Host Governments
- Host Communities

To be true partners, as far as possible, each group needs to share a common understanding and agreement of the principles of meaningful participation, and the principles which underpin it. These include:

- Using a human rights approach
- Applying an Age, Gender and Diversity framework
- Respecting the commitments in the Global Compact on Refugees.

As we consider forming partnerships, we need to record and consider what each group could bring to the relationship, and work out together how best to use these resources.

How can we develop partnerships between refugee communities and service providers?

We need to look at what each stakeholder can bring to the table



For example:

What can the UNSW team, who developed this Resource Kit bring to project?

- Over 35 years of experience in the field
- A Track record at the United Nations
- Networks with refugee women's organisations across the Asia Pacific region and around the world
- Academic knowledge and credibility
- Knowledge of how *the system* works.

What we don't have:

- Lived experience as a refugee
- Loss of country, status, citizenship, family members
- Experience of torture, and sexual and gender-based violence
- Experience of extreme poverty and deprivation
- Experience of violence and severe discrimination
- Knowledge of the community, strengths and vulnerabilities
- Prior skills and qualifications
- Skills and knowledge gained as a refugee.
- Historical understanding of their people
- In depth cultural understanding
- Experience providing support to their families and communities.
- Analysis framed by this lived experience
- Determination to build a new and better futures
- Potential solutions based on their knowledge and wisdom
- The strength of survivors.

These are just some of the things that Refugees can bring to the table