

Upcoming Meetings & Events

YOUTH MOBILITY, SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS IN WEST AFRICA AND THE HORN – FEB 23

On Tuesday, February 23 at 8:00 AM EST, a webinar by the Institute of Development Studies will address migration trends among youth in West Africa and the Horn of Africa. The webinar will also discuss conceptions that African migration is associated with security issues in Europe and Africa. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

CRITICAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF MIGRATION STUDIES – FEB 25

On Thursday, February 25 at 10:00 AM EST, join Maison Francaise d'Oxford for the first in a series of webinars to address shifting paradigms and approaches to migration studies. The webinar will discuss the evolution of migration theory throughout the past several decades. For more information and to register, click [here](#).



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Policy Recommendations to Improve the Protection and Care for Unaccompanied Children

By Mario Bruzzone

Thousands of refugee and immigrant children come to the United States alone or with their families each year, many having fled life-threatening dangers in their countries of origin. In fiscal year (FY) 2019, more than 69,000 unaccompanied children entered the custody of the U.S. federal government. Unaccompanied children (UCs) are under 18 years old, have no legal immigration status, and arrive in the United States without a parent or legal guardian to provide care and custody. Typically, children are placed into a network of shelters that span the country. Shelter care providers offer temporary homes and services, including educational, medical, and mental health services and case management to reunite children with their families.

Because unaccompanied children are especially vulnerable to trafficking and criminal predation, the 2008 Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act

(TVPRA) specified how federal agencies must handle situations involving unaccompanied children. Under the TVPRA, most UCs must be referred to HHS within 72 hours. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), situated within HHS, manages the custody of children while their immigration cases proceed in court. ORR is required to place each child in the least restrictive setting possible until it can reunify the children with a family member or other sponsor. In FY2019, systemwide length of care in ORR custody was 66 days.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented tremendous challenges to the health and safety of unaccompanied children in the United States—challenges that will continue in the medium term. Under the previous Administration, the U.S. government expelled unaccompanied children arriving at the U.S. border, until enjoined from doing so by the courts. These border expulsions exacerbated children's vulnerability by sending children into danger of violence, abuse, poor health, and disease.

Upcoming Meetings & Events (cont'd)

SOUTH ASIA UNBOUND: RETHINKING SOUTH ASIAN MIGRATION AND DIASPORA – FEB 26

On Friday, February 26 at 8:00 AM, the New International Histories of South Asia Network will host a discussion about migration patterns among South Asian communities. The discussion will cover issues surrounding both why people migrate out of South Asia, and also reasons others choose to stay. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

United States Issue Updates

• U.S. Citizenship Act Introduced in House and Senate

On February 18, the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 was introduced in both the House and Senate. The [Act](#), first proposed by the Administration in its first day in office, would transform the American immigration framework. USCRI will publish a detailed analysis soon and will follow progression of the bill. Some of the highlights of the bill include the following:

1. Creates an eight-year path to citizenship for the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, and provides Dreamers, TPS holders, and some farmworkers with an expedited three-year path to citizenship;
2. Reforms the family-based immigration system to keep families together by recapturing visas from previous years to clear backlogs, including spouses and children of green card holders as immediate family members, and increasing per-country caps for family-based immigration. It also eliminates discrimination against LGBTQIA+ families, provides protections for orphans, widows and children, and allows immigrants with approved family-sponsorship petitions to join family in the United States on a temporary basis while they wait for green cards;
3. Updates the employment-based immigration system, eliminating country caps, improving access to green cards for workers in lower-wage industries, giving dependents of H-1B holders work authorization, and preventing children of H-1B holders from aging out of the system. The bill also creates a pilot program to stimulate regional economic development, and incentivizes higher wages for non-immigrant, high-skilled visas to prevent unfair competition with American workers;
4. Supports asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations by eliminating the one-year deadline for filing asylum claims, reducing asylum application backlogs, and increasing protections for U visa, T visa, and VAWA applicants, including by raising the cap on U visas from 10,000 to 30,000 and allowing for earlier opportunities for employment authorization.

• New ICE Guidance Limits Agency Arrests of Migrants Who Are Not Removal or National Security Priorities

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) released new [guidance](#) on February 18 to conform with the Administration's Executive Order 13993, Revision of Civil Immigration Enforcement Policies and Priorities. The guidance limits ICE's discretion to arrest and detain noncitizens, requiring advanced approval for enforcement and removal actions against anyone who is not defined by the guidance as a national security, border security, or public safety threat. The guidance also enumerates discretionary factors ICE agents should consider when determining whether to make an arrest, including a noncitizen's criminal record, family circumstances, health status, ties to the community, and evidence of rehabilitation. All enforcement and removal actions will be reviewed by the Director of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on a weekly basis to ensure compliance with the guidance.

• House Democrats Introduce Comprehensive Legislative Package to Prevent the Deportation of Veterans

On February 18, Representatives Mark Takano (CA-41), Juan Vargas (CA-51), and Raúl M. Grijalva (AZ-3) reintroduced the Veteran Deportation Prevention and Reform Act to prevent noncitizen veterans from being deported, improve tracking of noncitizen veterans in immigration proceedings, and bring certain eligible deported veterans back home. The bill was originally introduced in 2019 as [H.R.4890](#). The Act would specifically direct the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to create a program and application process to allow eligible deported veterans residing outside of the United States to return to the country as noncitizens lawfully admitted for permanent residence. The package also calls for the Department of Defense (DOD) and DHS to jointly establish a program to ensure members of the Armed Services and their spouses and children have a pathway to citizenship.

United States Issue Updates (cont'd)

• U.S. Department of State Hosts Phone Call with Foreign Ministry of El Salvador

On February 19, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony J. Blinken hosted a phone [call](#) with Salvadoran Foreign Minister Alexandra Hill Tinoco. Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Hill discussed how a productive U.S.-El Salvador bilateral relationship can help us address the root causes of irregular migration. The Secretary also stressed that building economic opportunity, protecting and strengthening democratic institutions, eliminating corruption, and improving respect for human rights, including by combating impunity, are essential to ensuring the future of peace and prosperity in the region. Recently, the Administration terminated the Asylum Cooperative Agreement ([ACA](#)) with El Salvador in the belief that “there are more suitable ways to work with our partner governments to manage migration across the region.”

Around the World in International Migration

• United Nations Network on Migration Established in Turkey

Turkey, the world’s largest refugee host, marked the [launch](#) of the United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM) in Ankara last Friday. The UNNM is an initiative resulting from the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), and it will act to ensure that migration and development issues are integrated in a coordinated way in the country. The goal is to improve the management of migration while fostering better relationships between refugees and their host communities. The new Network is being seen as an opportunity to strengthen Turkey’s migration efforts, which are already seen as a “shining example” by other UN member states.

• Human Rights Groups Condemn Malaysia’s Decision to Repatriate Over 1,000 to Myanmar

The Malaysian government entered into an agreement with Myanmar last week to repatriate 1,200 people being held in Malaysian immigration detention back to Myanmar. The decision has caused an outcry from human rights groups due to the unsafe conditions in Myanmar. A military coup on February 1st has left the country in political turmoil. In addition, although the Malaysian government claims that none of the 1,200 people it plans to return are Rohingya, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been blocked from entering Malaysia’s immigration detention centers to identify its population for over a year. The Rohingya people have been persecuted by Myanmar’s government for decades, leading to grave concerns about Malaysia’s decision to repatriate people at this time.

• Escalating Conflict in Yemen On Track to Cause Worst Famine in the World

Houthi rebels are carrying out attacks in the Marib province of Yemen, where about one million Yemenis have fled to seek refuge from fighting in other areas of the country since 2015. Given Marib’s gas and oil reserves, the fight for this territory has exacerbated already-high tensions between the Houthis and the government. According to UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths, the conflict “is putting millions at risk with the fighting threatening to reach the camps of internally displaced persons.” Griffiths also warns that the struggle over Marib threatens the entire peace process. Malnutrition rates in the region are at a record high, with 16 million Yemenis currently going hungry and five million of those on the brink of famine.

Whispers from Washington

Current Capitol Hill Considerations

Administration to Effect Changes to the Paycheck Protection Program

On February 22, the Administration announced that it would effect [changes](#) via publication of an official rule sometime next week to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). The changes will benefit businesses of color, include a fix to Schedule C for sole proprietors and independent contractors, and provide greater access for noncitizen entrepreneurs who file their taxes with an individual tax identification number (ITIN).

Before this fix, the Small Business Administration (SBA) calculated the loan amounts for sole proprietors and independent contractors based on net profit rather than gross income, which does not give a true representation of their business relief needs. In addition, access was severely limited to those filing taxes with an ITIN. Changes in the rules for the latest round of funds provided a remedy for this issue for small farmers and ranchers, but other microbusinesses were not able to take advantage of that change.

Changes will go into effect when the rule is published sometime next week.

Global Gigabyte

Costa Rica hosts almost 90,000 Nicaraguan refugees. When the pandemic began, refugees living in Costa Rica were hit hard financially. In response, UNHCR has helped launch Mercado Upaleño, a weekly outdoor market to support farmers, artists, and small shop owners whose businesses have struggled. The goal of the market is to uplift local refugees and Costa Rican natives while ensuring everyone's safety through provision of masks, social distancing policies, and the open-air layout of the market.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grande, says that the market is a win-win, benefitting both refugees and their host communities. Those who sell in the market have been able to turn their financial situations around, supporting their families and allowing them to safely connect with other members of their communities.

Read more about the story [here](#).

If you have any questions
or comments, please
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