

# Association of Immigration and Refugee Services Professionals



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## Message from the President

As we entered a New Year and began to transition into spring, I reflect on the monumental policy and practice challenges affecting immigration work and refugee resettlement. Regardless of whether you are a front-line staff member, administrator, policy advocate, intern, or volunteer working with refugee and immigrant communities, our role as social change agents demands that we challenge inequity and champion human rights for all people. The work of cultural allies, in an oftentimes deeply flawed bureaucratic system, can be emotionally, spiritually, and physically exhausting. Recognizing the injustice, indifference, and intolerance that displaced people experience on a global scale (e.g. escalating violence in Syria; refugee camp protests in Rwanda due to food shortage; ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas) can be mindboggling. Oftentimes being privy to stories, of trauma and suffering as well as witnessing the everyday trials and tribulations that undocumented migrants and refugees experience in striving to acculturate/integrate,

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(see Natacha Nikokeza’s article) can further compound our feelings of guilt, pain, weariness, and frustration.

Although our feelings/reactions can never compare to our clients’ experience of trauma, overwhelming stress and emotional turmoil, we must acknowledge that our work as cultural brokers and social justice warriors can also negatively affect our wellbeing.

Charles Figley (1995) coined the term “compassion fatigue” while Laurie Anne Pearlman and Karen W. Saakvitne (1995) penned “vicarious trauma” to describe a professional’s feelings of angst and emotional drain resulting from their work with clients experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

The newcomers that we work with have often experienced trauma and its after-effects. Symptoms of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma in service providers may exhibit as irritability and agitation, a lack of empathy, or manifested as

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physical ailments/conditions such as headaches, insomnia, or changes in weight/eating behaviors (see readings on Compassion Fatigue, Vicarious Trauma, and Secondary Trauma for expanded symptoms and treatment). To address this naturally occurring phenomenon we must foster self-care and cultivate professional and personal resiliency for ourselves and our colleagues.

In adopting this continuous process, we begin to support and strengthen each other in maintaining our physical, emotional and spiritual equilibrium, grounding us as we move forward to forge justice and healing to those we serve. I know that I am a work in progress as I practice self-care. As I move from winter into spring, observing new blooms and the renewal of nature, I am inspired to revitalize my own emotional, spiritual and physical self-care. I wish you good health.

Maura Busch Nsonwu  
PhD, MSW, LCSW  
ARSP President



## ARSP Bids Farewell to Board Members and Welcomes a New Addition

Anita Fabos and Dipti Shah have stepped down as board members of ARSP after many years of service. We thank them for their commitment to ARSP and look forward to their continued involvement as members as they serve the immigrant and refugee service community. We welcome a new board member - Dr. Karin Wachter, Assistant Professor at Arizona State University.



Karin worked for ten years as a humanitarian aid worker with the International Rescue Committee focused on violence against women and girls in war and displacement, primarily in African contexts.

Since returning to academia, she has worked with U.S.-based refugee resettlement agencies as an evaluator and researcher. Her current research focuses on the intersection of forced migration, violence against women, and social support.



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## Local Initiative: Umoja Shares Support and Hope to Newcomers

My name is Natacha Nikokeza, my family and I came to the United States as refugees from Burundi nine years ago. We left everything behind as we were forced to flee our country; the process was long and intense, but we finally resettled in Greensboro NC, our home ever since.

Being a refugee means leaving family and belongings behind to start a new life in another country. This also often means learning a new language and adopting a new culture. Refugee resettlement agencies receive federal funding to help refugees for three months as they transition to a new country. After that period, refugees must work and become self-sufficient. Many agree that this timeframe is too short to learn a new language and successfully integrate into a different culture. Others may say this time-period is unrealistic and may set refugees up for failure. Successful resettlement requires support from the whole community - government, businesses, and established citizens, so that it is everyone's responsibility to help refugees achieve their goal of self-sufficiency.

My family and I were helped by a local resettlement agency as well as individuals from churches and other organizations. The resettlement

process was not easy; however, we had an easier experience than many refugees since we were able to speak some English.

This ability allowed my husband and I to volunteer with resettlement agencies and provide interpretation services for new arrivals. This involvement allowed us to connect with refugee communities.

We began to know when new families would arrive, and we would arrange to visit them and buy or share items that they needed. I was able to relate to them as my own experience of feeling "helplessness" was still fresh in my heart.

As the refugee community from East Africa began to rapidly grow we started a women's prayer group. The purpose of the group was to give to newly arrived refugee women the opportunity to meet with other women who have been in the U.S. longer, and to enjoy the comfort of speaking their native language. The participants were very excited to know that they were not alone, that others went through similar difficulties, and that together they could support one another and become independent.



[www.refugeeprofessionals.org](http://www.refugeeprofessionals.org)

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Later, a group of university women (North Carolina A&T State University, UNC-Chapel Hill, and UNC-Greensboro) and practitioners from resettlement agencies joined us.

Their inclusion provided another level of excitement as it demonstrated that more people cared about us and wanted to help.

We organized monthly meeting to support one another; our group celebrated baby showers for expecting mothers as well as provided educational sessions on a variety of topics. We named our group “Umoja”, which means “unity” in Swahili to symbolize our collective support of one another. The Umoja group has a large Congolese membership however; it is open to all refugee women as its mission is to be inclusive. Umoja has entered its fourth year and the refugee women have taken on leadership roles electing officers to help plan and run the meetings.

The United States has a long tradition of welcoming and giving hope to families fleeing war and persecution. The Umoja group is a shining example of embracing newcomers. Together we can keep the light of hope shining. You can listen to an interview with Natacha (me), Angelique (Umoja officer) and Holly (ARSP board member) on NPR’s The State of Things at <http://wunc.org/post/how-congolese-refugee-women-teamed-triad#stream/0>

Natacha Nikokeza  
Center for New North Carolinians  
Community Centers Coordinator



## DADAAB, Forgotten City of Refugees

New refugee crises are emerging around the world: Syrians, Rohingyas. Another crisis is emerging with Palestinians as the US cuts funding that feeds the Palestinian refugees under UN protection in several Middle Eastern countries. However, one group has not received much public attention lately. Somali refugees in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp are receiving little public attention.

Dadaab is a refugee camp in Northern Kenya, near the Somalia border, alongside a small town that has grown up around its perimeter. Camp history goes back to the early nineties, populated mostly by Somalis fleeing drought and endless wars. (The few South Sudan refugees there are being moved to Kakuma Refugee Camp elsewhere in Kenya.) At its peak early in this decade, there were over 400,000 UN registered Dadaab refugees. In a 2014 census, a couple of hundred thousand additional refugees were identified in this isolated desert area, without documentation or food ration cards. Dadaab grew as a city built of plastic sheets supported by branches cut from thorn trees in the surrounding desert. The surrounding area continues to be controlled by the revolutionary Al Shabaab fighting forces.

The only roads to and around this refugee camp city are not paved. Urban protections are far away. UN and NGO support personnel travel by armed caravans from Nairobi and by chartered planes to the landing strip at the camp. It is a high security closed camp, though Somali refugees continue to travel on their own across the dangerous and isolated desert. In 2014, UNHCR, the government of Kenya, and the official government of Somalia signed an agreement authorizing a voluntary repatriation initiative to facilitate Somali refugee returns to Somalia. However, the government of Somalia does not control territory except for a modest and insecure presence in Mogadishu, the capital. There continue to be military strikes in Mogadishu by Al Shabaab, resulting in loss of civilian lives (over 500 killed by a truck bomb in October of 2017). The surrounding territories are lawless, with Al Shabaab loosely controlling some areas and other areas controlled by some larger clans or tribes in the region.

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The United States has stopped resettling Somali refugees though the US continues to be militarily active in Somalia. Reuters reported a US military air strike killing 100 militants on November 12, 2017, in an area outside of Mogadishu.

The government of Kenya regularly and consistently blames Somali refugees in Dadaab for unrest and violence across Kenya, claiming that Dadaab is an Al Shabaab training ground. International observers do not support this position. In reality, most of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who fled to Dadaab, were seeking refuge from the violent Al Shabaab. In fact, the primarily Muslim population in the camp and in Somalia is from the Sufi strain of Islam, an Islamic movement that pursues peace and mutual cooperation amongst peoples regardless of religious or political affiliation. However, Kenyan government pressure and dwindling UN resources continue to put pressure on the residents of the camp to repatriate, some who have lived there for as long as 25 years.

Those who do return to Somalia often find that their ancestral lands have been taken over by others, including other tribes with whom they have no ties. There are no governmental or civic support systems to sustain them.

Some flee to Nairobi and try to live as undocumented migrants in a hostile environment. Others attempt to make the Mediterranean crossing to find safety in Europe. A few still wait futilely, hoping that the US will resettle them with US relatives. UNHCR currently seeks to process about 5000 people, from minority tribes, to be resettled in Europe, knowing that they would have no tribal security networks in Somalia.

By late 2017 the official registered camp population has reduced to a little over 200,000, the size of a medium city. Food portions and ration cards continue to be reduced, as the world outside has turned its attention to new refugee crises elsewhere.

(Note: Kristie Bailey, daughter of Raleigh Bailey, is currently on temporary assignment with UNHCR in Dadaab refugee camp)

Raleigh Bailey, Ph. D.  
Secretary, ARSP  
Director Emeritus, UNCG Center for  
New North Carolinians





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## “Human Flow” Documentary

“Human Flow” is a sprawling and heartbreaking exploration of the global refugee crisis. Captured over the course of a year in 23 countries, the film follows a chain of urgent stories that stretches through Afghanistan, Greece, Iraq, Kenya, Mexico, Turkey and beyond. There are some visceral works of cinema that must be seen on a big screen. “Human Flow” is one of them. Join hundreds of institutions across the country on April 29th for an end-of-year screening of Human Flow, immediately followed by a livestream Q&A with renowned artist, activist and Director Ai Weiwei. He will be answering audience questions live on air). View trailer [here](#). Please Contact Meredith Liguori with questions [meredith@rocofilms.com](mailto:meredith@rocofilms.com)

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## What will Certification Look Like?

The purpose of developing a certification process is to promote Professional Development among the ARSP Members and to acknowledge the skill and expertise which many of the staff of our agencies already have achieved. This program will establish “best practices,” and stand in compliance with ORR and national Voluntary Agencies. The populations served by ARSP members are among the most vulnerable people in the world and the care offered them must be of the highest standards. ARSP seeks to establish a unified, national, non-partisan framework, comprising academic, vocational and ethical standards based on principles of restoring humanity and client-centered care that takes into account the unique characteristics of refugees and other displaced people. As the standards are set up there are two program elements which are crucial:

1. Ethical Standards
  - a. It is important that all work is done to guide clients toward independence.
  - b. It is important that confidentiality be protected, not only for a client but for his or her family back in the home country.
  - c. It is important to avoid a conflict of interest.
2. A Case Management Service Plan
  - a. How is client-centered case management done while the agency plans and programs activities?
  - b. How is budgeting done so it leads to independence?
  - c. How is fund raising done without breaching client confidentiality?
3. What are the most important monitoring and evaluation steps for our programs that will ensure “best practices”?
4. What are important skills? (Please rank 1-5)
  - a. Travel to a refugee camp\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Experience with or as a refugee\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Course Work\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Language Skills\_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Experience living in another country\_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Training by the national agency\_\_\_\_\_
  - g. Training in trauma response \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. Understanding spiritual bases of clients\_\_\_\_\_
  - i. Cross Cultural training\_\_\_\_\_
  - j. Volunteer management skills\_\_\_\_\_



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Many of the things which are needed for one to become certified are already in place. Course work at universities, field trips overseas, internships in agencies. There are also standards required of ORR and national agencies. The standards and practices will be in line with these standards that are already operative. Please feel free to send feedback and suggestions for things that you feel will make this program valuable.

Please send feedback to:  
Ruth Bersin  
RIM: 6 Pleasant St., Suite 612,  
Malden, MA 02148 or  
[ruth.rim@verizon.net](mailto:ruth.rim@verizon.net)



## Are You A Member of ARSP?

Many immigration and refugee service professionals (researchers and advocates too!) joined ARSP due to their attendance in one of the numerous conferences that we have organized and/or participation in the many trips abroad that we have sponsored. We need your support to continue these opportunities. If you have not renewed your membership, then we encourage you to do so. We also hope that you will consider inviting your fellow colleagues, students and friends to become members.

*Reasons for Joining:*

### **1. Express your professionalism.**

Add your name to the ranks of other members who express the pride in the profession you have chosen.

### **2. Underscore your integrity.**

ARSP has a reputation for upholding high standards. Its members follow [Code of Ethical Principles and Standards of Professional Practice.](#)

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<http://www.refugeeprofessionals.org/>

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**3. Advance your career.**

ARSP members have educational opportunities designed to increase knowledge and keep up with the newest information, both on the international and local levels.

**4. Network with others who do what you do.**

Making connections is an important part of advocating for the cause you represent. Meet others who can help you make those connections.

**5. Advocate for your profession.**

ARSP has a developing program that monitors trends in education, regulation, and standard practices, and periodically advises members on required action.

**6. Serve your profession.**

Opportunities are available for individuals to serve on international and local committees that work on a variety of issues related to uprooted and displaced people and their plight.

**7. Use available resources and share best practices.**

ARSP is developing an online resource center that will provide its members with the resources needed to do their job well.

**8. Travel Opportunities.**

ARSP will organize trips to "hot spots" of the world where members will have an opportunity to learn about different stages of a refugee's journey

Membership Dues: Professional \$40; Student \$15; Supporting Member \$100 suggested amount

New Members should complete an application at:

<http://www.refugeeprofessionals.org/membership.html>

Mail in Dues to:

ARSP  
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Continuing members can fill out the form below and send payment to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Professional \$40     Student \$15     Supporting membership \$100 or \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please address checks to ARSP**  
**Mail: ARSP P.O. Box 80692, Austin, TX 78708**

**Website Connections**

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<https://cnnc.uncg.edu/>

UNHCR Syrian Refugee Crisis  
<https://www.searchingforsyria.org>

Faith Action ID Cards  
[http://faithaction.org/services/id\\_initiative/](http://faithaction.org/services/id_initiative/)