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## **Book Review**

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**Creating New Futures: Settling Children and Youth from  
Refugee Background**

**by: Mary Crock**

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The number of refugees has reached an unprecedented level in recent times. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2016), the number of displaced people in 2016 was estimated at 65.6 million, half of whom were under 17 years. In such a context, empirical literature that documents the successful integration and adaptation of refugee children to their new environment is essential. Therefore, the book *Creating New Futures: Settling Children and Youth from Refugee Background* is relevant as it relates to the experiences of settling youth using Australia as a case study. It brings together different essays from varied disciplines such as law, politics, social services, anthropology, sociology, psychology and psychiatry, to highlight good policies and practices related to better settlements of children and youth in destination countries such as Australia. Although Australia can be described as a world leader for its settlement and resettlement programs (Fozdar and Hartley, 2013), settlement conditions can vary significantly depending on the context of arrival. As Crock and Martin note in Chapter 2 “the settlement story for refugees in Australia has become a tale of two countries. Depending on a refugee’s mode and date of arrival, life in Australia can be heaven, hell, or something in between – a remote and unrealisable dream” (p. 69). The title refers to ‘refugee backgrounds’ to not only include present refugee asylum seekers, but a wider range of realities. For example, children who lived in refugee camps for a long time, children who been ‘resettled’ from another country where they arrived as refugees or children born from refugee families. The introduction of the book provides definitions of terms and concepts such as the 1951 Refugee Convention that defines a refugee. The introduction further provides a brief history of child and humanitarian migration in Australia and refugee settlement practices under the Australian law.

The book is structured in three parts with 14 chapters. The first part of the book is divided in two chapters. Chapter 1 stresses the potential vulnerability of refugee children, issues of informed consent and confidentiality, the need to maximise benefits and do no harm. This chapter argues for the support and monitoring of ethics in research involving refugee children and presents reflexivity as a core ethical concept. Chapter 2 gives a guide to understanding the legal framework for refugee children’s rights, entitlement and prospects. The authors, Crock and Martin detail the different types of visas, changes in

policies over the years and the impact of these policy changes on the paths of refugees. The most important difference underlined is whether they arrived with a visa or without a visa as asylum seekers. With a visa, they benefit from fair advantages (namely permanent residence and social security). Without a visa, detention is mandatory and can sometimes be indefinite, rights for protection are scarce and the perspective of permanent residency can be impossible. These 'hard line' policies are part of a 'no-advantage principle' (p.62) intended, in part, by the government as a punitive measure for irregular maritime arrivals (IMAs) and meant to discourage this type of arrival. At times, this policy has led to the contravention of human rights in accordance with international law

Part 2 of the book addresses the various uses of resettlement, which is a much more encouraging reality as it can truly give refugees, 'the chance for a new life' (p.72) and a 'secure future' (p.73). In Chapter 3, resettlement is defined as involving the selection and transfer of refugees from another country where they were previously recognised as refugees with permanent residency. Piper mentions several ongoing challenges. These challenges include the need to reconceptualise the issue of 'fraud' (namely in stressful or dangerous situations), the impact of the 'security issue' after 9/11, family reunification issues, the need to increase resettlement places and give sufficient assistance to refugees after arrival. Assistance is presented as the key to successful integration, regardless of the refugee's background. Chapter 4 offers an overview of resettlement in the global context, focusing on the role of the UNHCR. Clayton emphasises that while there appears to be an increasing perception that resettlement is the correct avenue for refugees, it is actually a complementary measure given only to 0.5% (five percent) of all refugees. Indeed, even if resettlement offers an 'orderly' path for the hosting country, it has to be understood that "forced migration is by nature ragged and disorderly" (p.88). Chapter 5 addresses the resettlement of refugee minors. Piper and Thom stress the importance of identifying vulnerabilities and discuss tools used by the UNHCR such as the heightened risk identification tool (HRIT), best interest assessments (BIAs) and best interest determination (BID). Chapter 5 further mentions complications relating to the process of resettling unaccompanied and separated children. These complications consist of difficulty with family tracing, non-recognition of custodial care by nonparents, fraudulent abandonment of children with an aim to secure their settlement in the destination country, potentiality of becoming 'anchor children' upon which the state is obligated to admit family members through family reunification and the difficulty of age determination. This chapter suggests ways of enhancing the effectiveness of resettlement as a protective tool, such as the need to improve commitment to the notion of resettlement by the UNHCR, providing giving proper interview spaces for small children and traumatised youth and translation of UNHCR's framework for the protection of children.

The final part of the book discusses the settlement question starting with a chapter that defines youth settlement in Australia. In defining successful settlement, an emphasis is made on integration and becoming self-reliant through education and employment, as well as feeling connected to others. In Chapter 6, Gifford and Kenny underline the importance of consulting young people, arguing that a 'good settlement' depends on the "participation of young people in their settlement journey" (p.127). Through the voices of young people, the authors also illustrate the devastating effects of detention. They conclude by observing that 'policy shapes lives' (p.132). Following this chapter, the book presents eight chapters on different and more specific angles. Whereas, Chapter 7 discusses "how young people from refugee background view settlement" and Chapter 8 presents "an examination of the settlement experience of unaccompanied humanitarian

minors in Australia.” Chapters 9, 10, 11, respectively, address issues of trauma and recovery (Chapter 9), health (Chapter 10) and deafness (Chapter 11) in the context of a refugee background childhood. The last three chapters draw on the Australian context: education (Chapter 12), family reunion (Chapter 13) and citizenship (Chapter 14).

Overall, the book offers a very good overview of major issues in the settlement of young people from refugee backgrounds. The mental health effects of detention are underlined at different occasions. For example, Chapter 9 notes these effects to include worsening symptoms of depression, anxiety or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Finally, the resilience of refugees is underlined which is an important point for migration politics as refugees are at times seen as vulnerable. Irrespective of using Australia as a case study, the information and experiences made available in *Creating New Futures* are pertinent in the actual global context of massive forced migration.

### References

- Fozdar, F. and Hartley, L. (2013) ‘Refugee resettlement in Australia: what we know and need to know’, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, DOI: 10.1093/rsq/hdt009.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2016) *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016* [online] <http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34.pdf> (accessed 22 June 2018).