

Displaced Scholars Peer Mentor Program

Report for the High-Level Officials Meeting Virtual Space
December 2021

1. Global Refugee Forum Pledge

Ahead of the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at UNSW Sydney committed to:

...supporting graduate and early career scholars with lived experience of displacement through [the Centre's] Emerging Scholars Network and to otherwise empower refugees through access to educational opportunities.

Displaced scholars frequently face considerable barriers in accessing traditional scholarly opportunities and fora due to financial constraints, interruption to education or limitations imposed by legal status. In making this pledge, the Kaldor Centre aimed to contribute to increasing representation of refugees and other people with lived experiences of displacement within the field of refugee and forced migration studies, where there is a critical need to better understand and incorporate perspectives of displaced people.

2. Progress since 2019

In 2021 the Kaldor Centre, in partnership with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and supported by the Universitas21 Researcher Resilience Fund, established a pilot Displaced Scholars Peer Mentoring Program to support early career scholars who have experienced displacement and are working or studying in the field of refugee and forced migration studies.

This Program was for individuals undertaking postgraduate study or other research-related activities who have experienced displacement themselves. Participants did *not* have to have formal refugee status to apply.

This Program established **peer mentoring partnerships** between early career researchers (ECRs) from displacement backgrounds and other ECRs to develop skills, networks and collaboration opportunities. Through these partnerships, displaced scholars received **one-on-one support** to pursue their academic and/or research goals. These goals included: writing for publication; navigating academic environments; applying for research-related funding and employment; and pursuing opportunities for research collaboration.

Mentees and mentors were located around the world, and virtual training and workshops were scheduled across different timezones to ensure equitable access for participants.

3. Outcomes

The pilot Displaced Scholars Peer Mentoring Program ran for six months from March to September 2021. Mentees and peer mentors met (virtually) every month.

Mentees and mentors built skills, knowledge and confidence, and positive relationships that will endure beyond the pilot. A total of ten mentees successfully completed the one-on-one mentoring and joined one or more skills workshops and roundtables on topics such as 'Getting your work published' and 'Developing a research proposal'.

Mentees also joined a series of virtual 'Research Roundtable' workshops with more experienced scholars in the field of refugee and forced migration studies. These workshops provided displaced scholars with opportunities to:

- develop their core academic skills, such as research, writing and presentation skills;
- workshop their research ideas with experienced scholars; and
- expand their academic networks.

An overview of these workshops was published on the [Kaldor Centre's website](#) and promoted via the Kaldor Centre's social media pages.

4. Highlights

The Kaldor Centre hosted a virtual public panel event on 7 October 2021, titled 'Displacement and the Academy'. In this panel discussion, mentees Tina Dixson, Ahmad Akkad, Thae Oo Khaing and Khulud spoke about their experiences of academic life, alongside program convenor Dr Tamara Wood and the Chair of UNHCR's Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network (GAIN), Professor Geoff Gilbert.

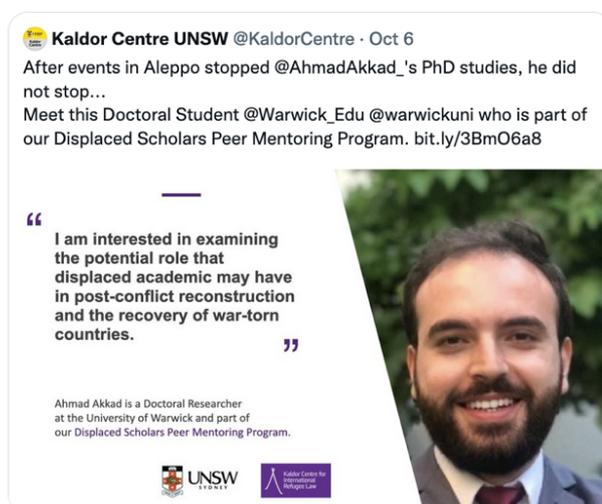
The event was co-hosted by the Kaldor Centre, GAIN, and UNSW's Forced Migration Research Network.

An audio recording of this panel discussion is available on [iTunes](#) or via the [Kaldor Centre's website](#).

Mentees were also given the opportunity to publish a [profile](#) interview on the Kaldor Centre's website. These were promoted across the Kaldor Centre's social media pages and email lists, and provided a way for mentees to publicise their own work.

"Applying to participate in this program is among the best decisions I ever made in my scholarly journey."

- Gabriel, mentee



5. Other support for displaced scholars

In developing and piloting a peer mentoring program for ECRs from displacement backgrounds, we learned a great deal about the factors which enable a successful virtual mentoring program, as well as the barriers that impede equitable access to research opportunities and career progression for scholars with lived experience of displacement.

The Kaldor Centre will build on the success of the first round of this mentoring program, by continuing the program for further cohorts, and sharing the lessons learned from the pilot with others who may be willing and able to offer similar opportunities to scholars from displacement backgrounds.

The [Program Guide](#) for the mentoring scheme is available on the Kaldor Centre's website, as a resource for others who may be interested in establishing similar programs.

Following completion of the program, a dedicated group within the Kaldor Centre's Emerging Scholars Network is being established for ECRs with displacement backgrounds to foster continued collaboration.



6. About the Kaldor Centre

The Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at UNSW Sydney is the world's first research centre dedicated to the study of international refugee law. Founded in October 2013, the Kaldor Centre undertakes rigorous research on the most pressing displacement issues in Australia, the Asia-Pacific region and around the world, and contributes to public policy by promoting legal, sustainable and humane solutions to forced migration.

Please contact the Kaldor Centre's Executive Manager if you have any questions about the mentoring program or other aspects of the Kaldor Centre's work.

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