



2016 Annual Report



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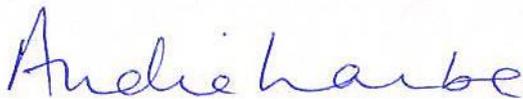
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Word from the Executive Director

2016 has been an impressive year for IRRI – our activities and advocacy efforts have led to an increase in exposure of a number of our core issues. We have identified and engaged with a large number of new targets; strengthened and revitalised other contacts; and increased our direct engagement with governments and inter-agency bodies.

We have continued to expand our social media presence and have increased our twitter followers by 49% over the year and our website has had an average of 16,500 hits a month.

Yet despite our best efforts and the commitments made during the UN meeting on migration and the World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey, the last six months of 2016 saw the continuation of negative rhetoric in Europe with regards to respecting refugees’ rights – and then of course the year ended with the election of Donald J Trump in the US. All of this means that our work is more important than ever and we continue to appreciate your support.



Andie Lambe
Executive Director

Background

IRRI was founded in 2004 to inform and improve responses to the cycles of violence and displacement that are at the heart of large-scale human rights violations.

Over the last 12 years, we have developed a holistic approach to the protection of human rights before, during, and in the aftermath of displacement, by focusing on:

- identifying the violations that cause displacement and exile,
- protecting the rights of those who are displaced, and
- ensuring the solutions to their displacement are durable, rights respecting, safe and timely.

We work to ensure the voices of the displaced and conflict affected communities are not only heard but heeded at the international level through our evidence based advocacy that is built on solid field based research and analysis.

We are registered as a non-profit organisation in the US, the UK and Uganda with a board of five (with recruitment currently in progress for additional members) headed up by our Nigeria-based Chair, Chidi Odinkalu, and our Uganda-based Vice-Chair, Salima Namusobya, with the other board members based in the UK, US and Tanzania.

Mission and Theory of Change

IRRI works to address causes of conflict-related displacement; to ensure that the rights of those forced to leave their homes are respected; and to promote appropriate and sustainable solutions to their displacement.

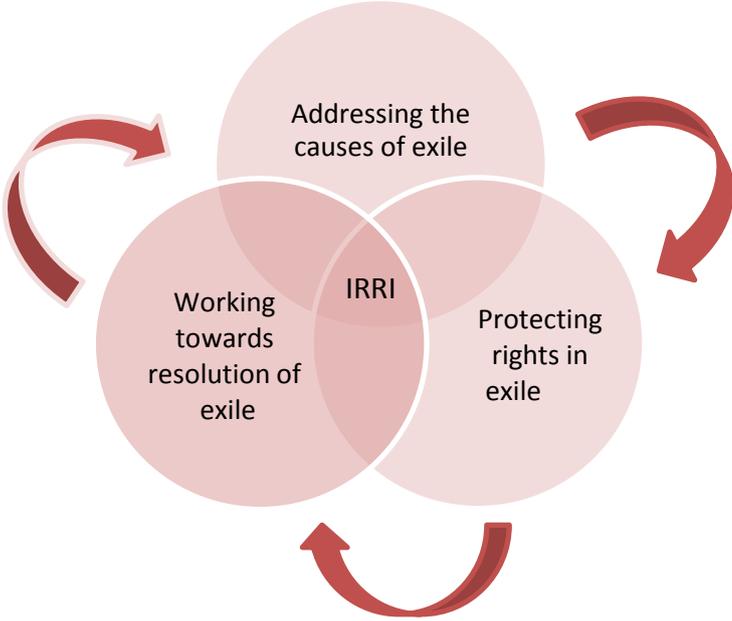
Displacement is a symptom and a cause of conflict and disenfranchisement; and failures to resolve displacement are a highly complex and multi-faceted and - if not managed correctly – a potential cause for future displacement.

Not only have the displaced been forced to leave their homes due to conflict, unrest or persecution, they can be vulnerable to abuse – both during their journey and when they arrive at a place of “safety”. Often responses to their arrival assume that they will be a burden, they are forced to live in unacceptable conditions, isolated and marginalised for long periods of time and with little genuine effort to offer real solutions.

IRRI recognises that just as the causes of displacement are multiple, so are the consequences. Therefore, IRRI does not set out to have a “one size fits all” approach, but instead takes a context-specific model that is both comprehensive and cognisant of the commonalities in the way that issues of displacement are treated at governmental and multilateral levels. Taking this comprehensive approach and recognising the interconnectedness of these issues, allows IRRI to formulate more nuanced and effective strategies of response.

While the challenges of civil conflict and the abuse of power by state and non-state actors are highly complex, we believe that there are opportunities to pre-empt these crises, or at a minimum mitigate their impact. Through an integrated framework of regional research, international advocacy and the amplification of local voices, our expertise in protecting human rights in situations of ongoing conflict and displacement in rights protection, mass atrocity and conflict prevention, peace-building and reconciliation enables IRRI to be uniquely effective and have a tangible impact on those whose lives and livelihoods are severely threatened.

This holistic approach is reflected in our three core programme areas, illustrated below:



Where IRRI worked in 2016



In 2016, IRRI's work spanned over 10 countries on the African continent – Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, Burundi, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Congo – and our commitment to increasing refugees' access to assistance was global.

Addressing the Causes of Exile and Displacement

IRRI's newly established and strengthened relationships have ensured that our work and publications under this programmatic area are more effectively shared with relevant policymakers; and that our recommendations have led to genuine change in understanding of the complexity of issues and, therefore, in policy responses.

Under this core programme area, IRRI also invested in raising the profile of situations that have the potential to escalate into conflict or violence. We continued to publish on the ongoing crisis in [Burundi](#) producing a [report](#) offering insights on crucial aspects of the crisis and another [report](#) bringing much needed understanding as to how Burundians are deciding to flee or stay in a context in which more than 300,000 are already in exile. Blog posts were released on the deteriorating human rights situation in other countries, including with regards to the December elections in [Gambia](#), on the increasingly tense situation in the [DRC](#) prior to the elections, and on the growing number of attacks on civilians in the eastern province of North Kivu, as well as on [Guinea's](#) and the [Republic of Congo's](#) election process. In DRC, IRRI worked with a coalition of NGOs to increase the attention and effort by the international community on the situation, including via advocating for targeted individual sanctions. IRRI was able to input significantly into the strategy of a regional and international CSO coalition, which helped produce a clearer, more effective strategy for response to the DRC election crisis.

We have seen tangible results from our work on [Sudan](#). For example, we have seen an increased interest in the conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile (the Two Areas) by international governments with many of the [recommendations](#) we put forward during Sudan's Universal Periodic review (UPR) [reflected](#) in the UNHCR member states' own position papers. In addition, our [briefing](#) on the impact of the conflict on children in the Two Areas, [report](#) on Blue Nile and [submission](#) to the UK Parliament's APPG on Sudan has helped to increase the variety of actors who are increasingly aware of the ongoing atrocities.

Ensuring Rights in Exile

All throughout 2016, IRRI [published](#) its monthly "Rights in Exile" newsletter, including original content on issues such as the situation in Rwanda as it related to cessation, India's new domestic asylum bill and UK immigration tribunals. In addition, a new section was created in the newsletter on statelessness, in recognition of the critical need to address this issue in relation to refugee status determination.

Our work and publications on refugee and IDP rights gained increased visibility in a context in which forced migration has received greater attention with the so-called "migration crisis" in Europe. At the UNHCR's annual NGO consultations in June, IRRI was particularly able to highlight our [Post Deportation Monitoring](#) programme, which was received with great interest from participants and allowed us to continue to raise the issue of post deportation risks. Similarly, our [report](#) on the alleged "voluntary" deportation of African asylum seekers from Israel to unknown third countries was picked by the media as much as by bilateral actors, with IRRI's findings featuring in [numerous media outlets](#) in at least three different languages.

We also contributed to the wider work undertaken by some of our civil society colleagues, including by attending experts meeting addressing what can be done to promote, support and facilitate solutions for refugees at all stages of displacement.

Intertwined to our advocacy work, we continued bringing direct support to refugees in 2016, both by maintaining and expanding the Rights in Exile website, and through support to individual casework. The website (www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org, soon to be merged to IRRI's main website) continued to expand its resources in our efforts to provide refugees and their advocates with access to reliable and necessary support and information.

Working towards Resolutions to Exile and Displacement

As a direct result of advocacy efforts around our peacekeeping research, we have seen an increased understanding and recognition of the impact on the affected communities. Policymakers were made more aware of the highly complex conflict dynamics on the ground, and in particular of the ways in which peacekeeping forces are perceived by the communities they are mandated to protect. Concerns that were raised by communities during our research in [Darfur, Sudan, South Sudan](#) and Somalia have been fed into policy-level discussions, a perspective that has, to date, been largely missing. We have seen the dialogue change amongst states, whereby they are increasingly recognising that the issues raised by communities need to be acknowledged and responded to.

The impact of this has been evidenced both through direct feedback from the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and in a [Ministerial Communiqué](#) produced at the UK-led Ministerial meeting on Peacekeeping that drew heavily on our recommendations. Furthermore, follow-up discussions have shown that the peacekeeping force in South Sudan, UNMISS, has [enacted some of our key recommendations](#) with regards to an increase in patrols outside the perimeters of the Protection of Civilian sites and in increasing communication with local communities to explain their mandate.

As an active member of the [Citizenship Rights in Africa](#) (CRAI) Coalition, IRRI's work on citizenship and nationality rights has primarily focused on contributing to the coalition's activity in terms of communication and advocacy. All throughout 2016, we maintained the CRAI website, published weekly updates to the CRAI mailing list, engaged on social media via @CRAIAfrica (resulting in a 28% increase in followers in 2016) and Facebook, and published a number blog posts on citizenship, statelessness and nationality rights. IRRI also co-organised and participated in a training session for members of the network on advocacy strategies, and brought forward the concerns of the network about statelessness at the UNHCR Global Consultations in Geneva.

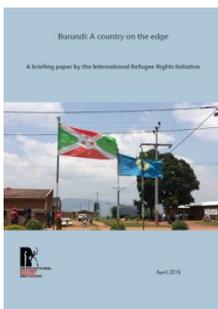
IRRI contributed a chapter in the [book](#) *Solving Statelessness*, "Ensuring that today's refugees are not tomorrow's stateless persons: Solutions in a refugee context". In addition, based on seven years of research by IRRI, Palgrave [published a book](#) "Refugees, Conflict and the Search for Belonging" which examined the convergence of two problems: the ongoing realities of conflict and forced migration, and the crisis of citizenship and belonging. By addressing them together, it examined how a holistic approach can more effectively point the way towards possible solutions.

IRRI's major publications in 2016



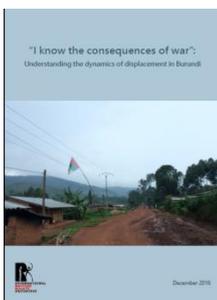
[“A Crisis Normalised: Civilian perspectives on the conflict in Sudan's Blue Nile State”](#) explores the views of civilians displaced from or living within Blue Nile, on the causes and consequences of the conflict between the Sudanese government and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army - North (SPLM/A-N). The report is based on interviews carried out in April and May 2016 in SPLM/A-N held Blue Nile as well as in Juba and Maban refugee camp in South Sudan.

[“No one on the earth cares if we survive except God and sometimes UNAMID': The challenges of peacekeeping in Darfur”](#) was the second of a three-part study on civilian perspectives on peacekeeping forces in Africa. The findings make it clear that when the UN Security Council (UNSC) considered the upcoming renewal of the peacekeeping mandate of UNAMID in late June, not only was this not the time for the international community to walk away, it was, in fact, time for UNAMID to step up.



[Burundi: A country on the edge](#) demonstrated that the government of Burundi is acting in a highly repressive way, documenting and drawing attention to accounts of disappearances, arrests and arbitrary killings and limited freedom of press and association. As a result, the government is shrinking the spaces available for non-violent opposition, spurring some to resort to violence that could tip over into civil conflict.

[Impact of the conflict in Sudan's Southern Kordofan on children](#) - In many conflicts around the world, children are not safe. As the former UN Secretary-General's Expert on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children noted “[n]ot only are large numbers of children killed and injured...but countless others grow up deprived of their material and emotional needs, including the structures that give meaning to social and cultural life. The entire fabric of their societies – their homes, schools, health systems and religious institutions – is torn to pieces.” The ongoing conflicts in Sudan's Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur states are no exception



[“I know the consequences of war’: Understanding the dynamics of displacement in Burundi”](#) looked at the reasons why the number of persons displaced by the crises in Burundi was so rapid and significant. Between April 2015 and November 2016, more than 315,000 Burundians fled the country and a further 100,000 are internally displaced. The report explores why some fled and others stayed and shows that displacement was driven both by the direct tensions between government and opposition, but also by broader social, economic and cultural concerns.

Funding overview

IRRI is grateful for the support it received in 2016 from the Open Society Foundations, Human United, The Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, as well from anonymous and individual donors. None of the work accomplished would have been possible without them.



IRRI's 2016 financials are still being audited, in the meantime, we would be more than happy to share IRRI's audit report for 2015 upon request to info@refugee-rights.org

2017 prospects

In 2017, IRRI will continue developing research, communication and advocacy under our three main programmatic areas, while tackling cross-cutting issues such as the expansion of our funding base. In the first quarter of 2017, IRRI started on two new pieces of research. The first, in partnership with the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), will address causes of migration and the protection challenges faced by migrants from Ethiopia and Eritrea, through conducting applied empirical research in three sites along a key migration route from the Horn of Africa to Europe (Addis Ababa, eastern Sudan and Italy). The report will produce policy recommendations on the best ways to respond to the realities of trafficking and smuggling of migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia. Knowledge sharing events will ensure the dissemination of findings to all stakeholders working in migration in the region.

The second, starts but acknowledging that addressing refugee flows, violence and violent extremism are fundamentally intertwined. Indeed, violence and violent extremism are among the most common drivers of displacement. Too often those in flight are identified with the very forces that they are fleeing, labelled as extremists themselves and either denied access to safety or marginalised within the countries to which they have fled as a result. In response, IRRI will investigate policies that, rather than exacerbating marginalisation and pushing refugees towards radicalisation, involve refugees into the fight against extremism. With illustrations from the Somali refugee communities in Kenya, Uganda and Europe, IRRI will also look how alternatives can be deployed to change the global conversation on extremism and allow for security fears to be addressed with more nuance and more effectively.

We are also excited to have completed the last of our peacekeeping studies – looking at AMISOM – and will publish the report in due course, along with a policy paper that will pull together the findings from all three papers. We will continue monitoring situations in the region and raising issues of concerns with relevant actors.

Last but not least, our work on supporting refugees themselves, by providing them with resources and access to support will continue unabated, even as the space for this works continues to diminish.

How to support IRRI

Donations to the International Refugee Rights Initiative would be gratefully received. You can donate online, via bank transfer or by post.

Kindly visit [IRRI's website](#) to make an online donation, or contact us for our bank details if you wish to donate via bank transfer. You can also donate to IRRI by [shopping on Amazon](#). To send your contribution by post, make a cheque payable to the "International Refugee Rights Initiative" to:

International Refugee Rights Initiative
1483 York Avenue, No. 20463
New York, NY 10021
UNITED STATES

Or

International Refugee Rights Initiative
Suite 104, The Citadel, Bath Road
Chippenham, Wilts SN12 2AB
UNITED KINGDOM

Please contact us if you would like to set up a standing order or donate regularly and we will provide you with the relevant information.

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