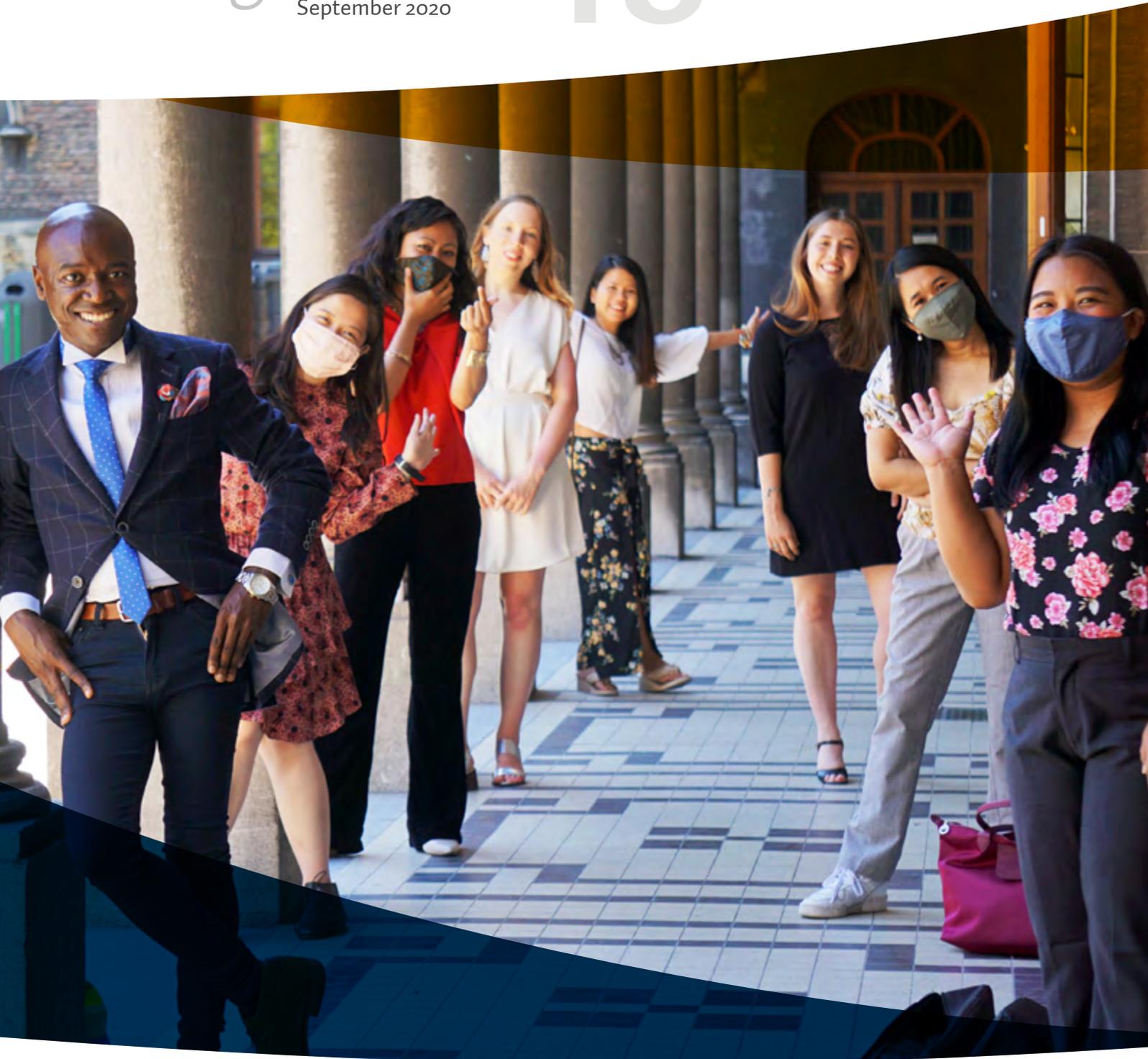


Exchange to change **Alumni** magazine #45

September 2020



IOB
Institute of Development Policy
University of Antwerp

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E2C

To contact us:

IOB - University of Antwerp
Lange St.-Annastraat 7
2000 Antwerp

e-mail:

iob@uantwerpen.be

website:

www.uantwerpen.be/iob

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E2C invited its alumni to share their perspectives on what they feel decolonization of education and research in development studies should be

Knowledge encounters

We are on the brink of a new academic year...and this year will certainly be exceptional in many ways.

First of all, it will be the first- and hopefully also the last year- in which, due to the Corona pandemic, we will not be able to welcome all our students to start their academic journey in Antwerp as usual.

How many students will be able to travel to Antwerp to attend the opening ceremony? How many students will be able to sit together in a classroom and learn, discuss, interact, live together as we are used to? What will the online interaction in IOB's digital classroom be like when some of our students have just woken up, others are having their lunches, and still others are longing for a good night's rest...

Additionally, IOB has embarked on a process – partly induced by the need to rethink education in Corona times- to innovate its education, developing its long term strategy as an actor within a more globalized, digitalized and (hopefully) decolonized education arena.

One of the articles in this edition precisely tackles the question of how to decolonize education and research. Exchange to change sought the views of IOB staff, students and alumni on what decolonizing education and research actually means and how an Institute of Development Policy like IOB should go about it. Many interesting perspectives, ideas and suggestions surfaced from our survey (pxx).

One alumna (check) actually suggests decolonizing education by stimulating “knowledge encounters”.

In her view, decolonized education (and also research) is about facilitating horizontal exchanges of knowledge between different types of knowledges originating from all over the world, knowledges derived from a variety of theories but also the life experience and lived realities of citizens around the globe.

This type of “knowledge encounter” places interaction between IOB ‘students’ and ‘lecturers’ at the core of what it means to learn in a developing institute like IOB. The centrality of this interaction was also exactly what IOB staff intuitively identified as the DNA of IOB in one of its strategic policy meetings geared towards innovating IOB education.

Even though generating these knowledge encounters is not so straightforward in an online education reality, IOB lecturers and education support staff are going the extra mile to facilitate ‘interaction’ in a digital or blended format.

So, we really hope to meet you all, staff, students and alumni, this year ... on- or offline ... and invite you to participate in ... enriching knowledge encounters!

3/2020 • © IOB - Universiteit Antwerpen

E2C team: Ivan Ashaba, Anil Chaudhary,
Hans De Backer, Sara Dewachter, Joëlle
Dhondt, Mollie Gleiberman, Massiel Jimenez
Flores, Mark Kadigo, Ana Sanchez Ramos,
Sarah Vancluysen, Juan Sebastian Velez
Triana

COVID-19 in the context of forced displacement, insights from stakeholders.

Globally, about 80 million people are forcibly displaced, among whom 26 million are refugees (UNHCR, 2020). The major drivers of forced displacement include increased conflict, violence, extreme weather events and precarious socio-economic conditions in countries or places of origin. Faced with these unbearable conditions, migration seems to be the best option. However, forcibly displaced persons, particularly refugees, are not always welcomed into rosy havens in the receiving countries. Rather, they are faced with other challenges including poor housing, high health risks, limited employment opportunities and food insecurity among others. The incidence of COVID-19 can only serve to aggravate an already fragile situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic, consequent policies and protective measures are affecting different groups of people in different ways. Considering this, what could the situation be like for various actors within the context of forced displacement, including the refugees, humanitarian organizations and researchers? In this article, Exchange to Change (E2C) spoke with alumnus **Kujiek Ruot Kuajien** (affiliated to the South Sudanese refugee community), **Gabriela Marcondes** (Monitoring and Evaluation officer at UN World Food Program), **Bob Denis Odongo** (Humanitarian Advisor, Irish Aid) and **Tewodros Aragie Kebede** (Senior Researcher, Fafo, Norway) to get a better insight into how displaced communities try to cope with the additional challenges posed by COVID-19, and how humanitarian actors and researchers are managing their operations accordingly.



E2C: From your work experience, what is the current situation like with regards to COVID-19?

KRK: The lockdown which the world has been forced into due to the Coronavirus pandemic depicts, in so many ways, how refugees are locked down, for some partially while others for a greater part of their lives if not their entire life. South Sudanese refugees are scattered the world over. Those seeking refuge in neighbouring countries like Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan (ironically) and the rest of the world face challenges based on the COVID-19 policies of host countries. However, I will focus on those refugees that are confined within the country in the various United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) camps, often referred to as Protections for Civilian Sites (POCS). Guidelines have been put in place by the humanitarian agencies like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and national NGOs that run the only clinic in the POCS, but following them is quite difficult. For instance, observing social distancing in

the POCS setting is a difficult task since there are usually stampedes when accessing rationed water and food. In addition, households comprising of an average of seven members live in close proximity to each other and single phone charging systems necessitate close contact with numerous people. Moreover, within these POCS, face masks which are required for safety are distributed at a cost, reducing the purchase rates as some would have to choose between spending their money on a face mask or on food. The insufficiency in availability of essential facilities also persists. For example clinics are overwhelmed as usual and as a result the risk of spread of COVID-19 increases.

Further, fights usually occur within POCS and resolving such conflicts requires that groups convene for negotiations. The above examples illustrate how health guidelines such as social distancing are easily undermined or difficult to effect. Yet these difficulties could be coupled with apathetic beliefs by some that as refugees, they have nothing to lose and worrying about COVID-19 should be left to those who have resources which they would not want to lose in death. Additionally, during humanitarian crises service provision and funding to curb the suffering of the beneficiaries is prioritized. Funds are being reduced and due to the restrictions on movement in order to control the virus, humanitarian services have been reduced, and/or even worse, stopped in certain areas.

GM: While I was still in South Sudan, measures implemented by the Government as well as

the UN were very strict in terms of movement within and into and out of the country. As a UN worker, our movement in the capital Juba was restricted to essential activities (groceries, pharmacy) and we implemented telecommuting and a rotation schedule to ensure that only a few of us would be physically in the office at the same time.

BDO: Uganda closed its borders to all new refugee arrivals to try to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Since Uganda confirmed its first COVID-19 case on 21 March 2020, the number of positive cases increased to 1,124 as of 20 July 2020, including 1,072 Ugandans and 52 refugees.

TAK: Since the onset of the

During such major crises, vulnerable populations such as forcibly displaced persons tend to be neglected by broader policies and measures being implemented.

pandemic, particularly from February onwards, there have been lockdowns and restrictions. Within any given country, you have several processes that are at play. On one hand, measures such as the closure of workplaces, closure of services, restriction of movement, are being taken to curb the spread of the disease. On the other hand, given the impact the crisis has had on employment which means the majority of people have become unemployed, supportive measures are being implemented by governments;

for example, provision of wage subsidies and support to businesses, among others. The question now is that within such a context, “who is being left behind?” During such major crises, vulnerable populations such as forcibly displaced persons tend to be neglected by broader policies and measures being implemented. Humanitarian agencies have been mobilizing to restrict harm and somehow protect those populations from exposure to the disease. However, we have a large number of refugee populations in the Middle East. Also, though the pandemic’s health effects have reportedly been low in the African context, taking Uganda and Ethiopia, the

two largest refugee hosts in Africa, we see that most refugees are living in encampments. In camp settings, the immediate health risk is quite substantial.

E2C: How are the refugees or forcibly displaced persons responding to the pandemic and how are the policies and measures affecting them?

KRK: For the forcibly displaced persons, coping strategies include reducing the amount of food cooked, number of meals eaten per day, and borrowing from each other or exchanging through some systemic barter trade that has developed over the 7 years since the POCS were set up. The coping mechanisms established by NGOs include further rationing of the already small portions of basic foods and other supplies. There has also been a reduction in the frequency of water supply. Water is usually supplied using water tank vehicles and the

supply frequency has been modified from 2 hours a day to 1 hour and from once a day to every two days. These strategies are applied by the NGOs, in order to sustain provision of the goods and services needed. Some other coping strategies like women fetching firewood accompanied by UNMISS-soldiers are no longer viable due to the social distancing rules. This has increased the vulnerability of both women and children, who nonetheless must forge means of survival despite COVID-19. The general philosophy anyway for many in South Sudan, IDPs or not, is to find means of survival, for it is better to die from COVID-19 than hunger.

Therefore, the reactions from the beneficiaries is largely an obvious disappointment and feeling of desperation. Yet interestingly some IDPs have hailed COVID-19 as their vehicle of retribution, celebrating the announcement of the deaths of some of the ‘liberators’ whom they view as corrupt politicians. This is despite the deaths being attributed to other causes.

BDO: The refugees are in dire need just like the citizens who have been under lockdown. For refugees, Irish Aid partners UNHCR, WFP continued to provide cash and food assistance to the 1.4 million refugees hosted in 13 settlements (Adjumani, Bidibidi, Imvepi, Kiryandongo, Kyaka II, Kyangwali, Lobule, Nakivale, Oruchinga, Palabek, Palorinya, Rhino Camp, Rwamajja) plus the urban refugees in Kampala. Refugees continue to carry out livelihood activities like farming and business amidst the lockdown to survive.

TAK: Fafo has done a series of studies investigating the impacts the pandemic may have on specific populations of refugees within 3 countries in the Middle East, that is,

Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. Fafo's idea for these studies started with a conversation with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to discuss the potential effects that the crisis may have, particularly on employment or more broadly the labour market. For example, if refugees became unemployed, what implications that would have. What is emerging is that the labour markets are characterized by informality, that is, people working in the informal sector or employed informally within the formal sector. And most of the employed refugees are either working informally or self-employed. Moreover, according to ILO's broader definition, self-employment is characterized as informal work. Therefore, these are less equipped to cope with the effects of the pandemic than their counterparts employed in the formal sector. Those who have better working conditions to begin are relatively better at coping with the crisis. For example, we find that income fall is limited, and the number of persons permanently laid off as a result of the crisis is limited in sectors that are more formal than the informal. Moreover when we ask which support mechanism would be useful to withstand the effect of the crisis, most of the refugees point to the cash support. Cash becomes important in these settings when one's income is significantly lacking because of a lack of work. Additionally, small scale business owners call for government support systems to help withstand the effects.

E2C: To what extent are the activities of your organisation and of other humanitarian organisations that are working with displaced populations impacted?

KRK: As already mentioned, social distancing in camp situations or in general in areas

where humanitarian assistance is the norm like South Sudan has been hit on several grounds. The first is the safety of staff, especially international ones who already risk their lives and this has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In a country where internet accessibility is a luxury for a few, working from home during lock down is utopian. After all, the humanitarian food, health and non-food Items et cetera cannot be delivered online even if internet were available. All United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flights that coordinate humanitarian operations are also restricted from travelling, which has affected humanitarian service delivery. In areas where there are no government services, which make up a huge percentile of the country, and humanitarians seem to give a glimmer of hope in terms of service provision, the effects are dire. Other efforts by the national staffs and camp leaders are not bearing much fruit. This is mostly due to the reduction in funding as the world has suffered an economic setback. The impact of the measures of COVID-19 on humanitarian service delivery is therefore conclusively negative for the little light that was there has further reduced in size and brightness.

GM: The Government of South Sudan has issued guidelines outlining measures to prevent and mitigate the spread and transmission of COVID-19. Some of these measures include maintaining social distancing and restricting movements, among others. These measures have affected the extent to which the WFP can monitor food assistance activities. To mitigate the risks associated with food assistance with limited monitoring, the

Country Office (CO) stood down conventional monitoring data collection methods (face-to-face interviews, site visits, focus group discussions) and put in place remote monitoring approaches to conduct process monitoring of food and cash assistance activities.

BDO: COVID-19 poses additional challenges in the monitoring of humanitarian partner activities as the country has been under lockdown since 20 March 2020. Additionally, the number of staff allowed to access the Irish Embassy Office is restricted, as a measure to reduce crowds. Currently I work once per week and am not able to complete all the tasks. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) has been reported to be on the increase among refugees during this lock down. According to an Irish Aid partner, UNHCR, the main factors contributing to increased SGBV incidence during the COVID-19 crisis were economic hardship and inability to earn money; increased alcoholism and reduced food rations, triggering domestic violence; failure by the heads of households to provide for their family, leading to intimate partner violence; and limited access to financial support.

TAK: The way we conduct research at Fafo has had to change because of the crisis and the resultant measures. We have had to cancel several field trips, thus the level of physical interaction has been limited. Changing the modes of work has limited the in-person experience of understanding what is happening on the ground. Nonetheless, when a crisis hits, a lot of knowledge is needed. So there has been a growing need for impact studies. More avenues for exploration have been opened up because evidence has become even more important to guide specific policy interventions. Similarly in

the humanitarian sector, there are projects that are providing support systems for refugees. Indeed there has been a lot of mobilization among the humanitarian organizations in response to the anticipated immediate effects especially for refugees in camps. Some camps can have over two hundred thousand refugees. For example in Jordan, the Zaatari camp has a large number of refugees. Also in Ethiopia, in the Northern and South-Western region, there are large numbers of refugees in a camp setting. So the humanitarian agencies are being mobilized to minimize the potential health effects. But there remains the need to understand how different groups of people are affected by the pandemic. For Fafo, therefore, the recent months have been very busy. Mainly working remotely and virtually with different actors, we are coordinating surveys, assessments, analyses and communications to reach out to policymakers in order to bring attention to vulnerable populations that are being affected by the crisis even more. We have done a series of surveys on vulnerable populations using telephone surveys and databases from various humanitarian and development organizations. Work has increased mainly because evidence becomes very important to guide policies in crisis situations.

E2C: What are your future expectations reflecting on the COVID-19 crisis and the current policies and measures in relation to refugees/forcibly displaced persons?

KRK: The refugee crisis will continue for it has almost become genetic - this needs a lengthy discussion. It is unfortunate that I have to state such as a South Sudanese but history will not forgive me if I



do not state reality. The young people, mostly those that have studied from outside, and including the now middle aged "Lost boys and Girls", still hold the key to a better South Sudan. The following options in my view will end the refugee crisis, minus which the future is gloomy: The liberator must be unseated (this is proving difficult within South Sudan for they have made it clear they have no rubber bullets and teargas but live bullets) and the only means now is through social media from outside; formation of a confederate state or a federal state (some believe in this) and/or further break up of South Sudan to nation states (I am a proponent). Humanitarian operations will remain reduced as long as the COVID-19 pandemic persists. They might, however, employ other strategies like giving more powers to national partners and staffs to run the most needed tasks since they live within the communities where minimal

observation of the COVID-19 rules is not a significant problem. For humanitarian assistance in general in South Sudan, I believe it will last as long as there is no meaningful peace and other alternatives that will lead to a cohesive society. Humanitarians are the government to most South Sudanese, including those not in POCS. On the one hand, they try to rehabilitate and heal wounds, on the other, the government destroys, kills and chases away its citizenry. The 'liberators' are currently using COVID-19 as an excuse to delay the bad peace being forced on them by Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other international bodies.

GM: Based on my experience in South Sudan, I believe that the COVID restrictions forced organizations and people to test new approaches to ensure continued assistance and accountability to displaced

communities worldwide. What I saw was a quick adaptation to the new, stricter environment in which organizations operate in, and the use of new approaches to overcome setbacks. In terms of M&E: despite challenges in reaching beneficiaries remotely and adapting tools and methods to fit remote monitoring approaches, digitization of monitoring processes has contributed to (i) enhanced efficiency and effectiveness in data collection, (ii) improved utilization of monitoring findings to inform decision making, (iii) reduced timelines for data analysis and monitoring reporting, and (iv) improved follow up and resolution of monitoring issues by field offices, technical units and cooperating Partners.

BDO: Key challenges include dwindling humanitarian funding especially for refugee and COVID-19 response. With the severe impact of Covid-19 in

Europe, USA and Asia, donors have held back their funding to support their citizens first before they can support Africa. Also, the impact of Covid-19 on Africa has been less compared to Europe, something that has made donors reprioritize where to channel their support.

TAK: The impact of such a crisis can be differentiated by the political, social and economic context of a country. However, what this pandemic has done is to reveal existing structural problems in social and economic systems. This means that the pandemic will have significant consequences conditional on existing prior conditions of the countries. For example in some countries, like in Jordan, we find that funding distribution systems are relatively lacking. The lack of mechanisms to reach the vulnerable makes it difficult to distribute available funds. So, one message is that it is important to have systems

in place to better shoulder effects during crises such as this one. Also, many of the forcibly displaced persons' livelihoods are dependent on participating in the labour markets. Therefore, one other take away for organizations that are able to learn and adapt, is to use this crisis as an opportunity to formalize the informal sectors e.g. registration of businesses. Providing social protection for employees is an important lesson we draw from this as well. Further, there is a need for studies to better understand the level of impact of this pandemic on those whose livelihoods are almost solely dependent on participating in the labour markets, particularly in urban areas. We have limited knowledge on urban refugees and the effects that the COVID-19 crisis has had on them. Therefore, for the future, I presume that the pandemic's lingering effects may not subside easily. For example, forms of interactions particularly for those participating in the labour markets may be substantially affected. It is therefore fundamental to understand the nuanced mechanisms of how this crisis situation affects human interactions more broadly. I also anticipate that if the crisis continues and the economic impact is substantial, particularly on those countries providing support to refugees, there is a risk that the existing support systems may deteriorate. However, it is rather difficult to anticipate the level of impacts at this stage. This again highlights the need for more follow-up on what is happening on the ground, hence the assessments being done to try and understand how different groups of people are affected by the pandemic. In my view, just as the research sector has adapted

quite a bit, the information from current assessments is important to support learning and adaptability as the world strives to attain capabilities for resilience. I am more hopeful about the post-COVID-19 future but there is a lot to be learned.

EzC: Finally, briefly introduce your organization, summarizing your involvement in the context of forced displacement.

KRK: I am affiliated to members of the South Sudan refugee community globally.

GM: World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian agency delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and to build resilience. In South Sudan, WFP works with partners and communities to deliver food assistance and conduct nutrition programmes, aiming to support the most vulnerable and food insecure communities that have been affected by years of conflict, hunger and poverty. As a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer, I worked with the M&E team in Juba Country Office to ensure programmes would generate quality evidence on the outcomes and effects of WFP's food assistance activities on the lives of beneficiaries, with which to inform operational decision-making and strategic reorientation.

BDO: Key Irish Aid activities include donor support to UNHCR (Focus on Education in Emergencies and SGBV); WFP (Focus on supporting Cash and food assistance for the 1.4 million refugees in Uganda) and supporting the school feeding programme under WFP for Karamoja regions. As the Humanitarian Advisor I take the lead on strategic planning, technical advice, and the assessment of programme proposals and monitoring of

agreed programmes through the humanitarian pillar of the Irish Aid Country Strategy with a selected number of its external partners. I ensure there is compliance, by partners with agreed MoUs including the relevant programmes, policies and strategies of Irish Aid, ensuring that projects are implemented in ways that are consistent with humanitarian accountability principles and standards, demonstrate results and generate knowledge to support implementation of Ireland's International commitments.

TAK: Fafo is a Norwegian social science research institute based in Oslo, Norway. Its original roots relate to the Norwegian labour union movement. Currently, Fafo is one of the largest independent social research institutes in Norway. The institute conducts research focusing both on Norway as well as on global studies. For the global studies, the primary conceptual orientation is to take on a living conditions approach to try and understand the challenges faced by- and the conditions shaping the lives and the livelihoods of economically and socially vulnerable populations. Many of Fafo's studies have received global attention and currently the organization has a series of research activities on refugee studies in the Middle East and Africa with an interest in studying the labour markets, inequalities and transition from conflict to longer-term settings, among others. In the Middle East, Fafo's studies have been carried out among Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, Palestinian refugees in the region and earlier on Iraqi refugees in Jordan. In Africa, Fafo has been studying the concept of forced displacement in a number of countries. The earliest studies were among the

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Uganda and later on the refugee populations there. We have also conducted studies among Liberian refugees, Ivorian refugees and more recently Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. Currently, our role is to coordinate studies to better understand the impact of the crisis on the refugees and influence policy. I am a senior researcher at Fafo and I have been with the organization for the last 13 years.



Kujiek Ruot Kuajien



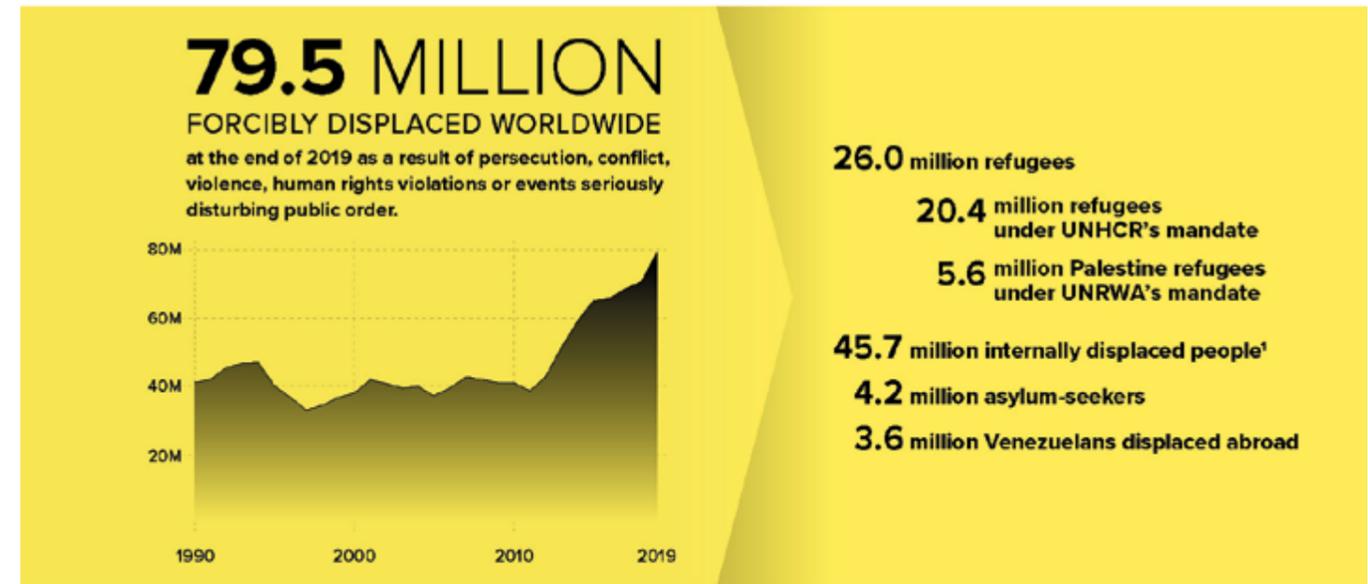
Tewodros Aragie Kebede



Gabriela Marcondes



Denis Bob Odongo



40% CHILDREN

An estimated 30 – 34 million of the 79.5 million forcibly displaced persons were children below 18 years of age.

85% HOSTED IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Developing countries hosted 85 per cent of the world's refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad. The Least Developed Countries provided asylum to 27 per cent of the total.

2.0 MILLION NEW CLAIMS

Asylum-seekers submitted 2.0 million new claims. The United States of America was the world's largest recipient of new individual applications (301,000), followed by Peru (259,800), Germany (142,500), France (123,900) and Spain (118,300).

73% HOSTED IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

73 per cent of refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin.

5.6 MILLION DISPLACED PEOPLE RETURNED

5.6 million displaced people returned to their areas or countries of origin, including 5.3 million internally displaced persons and 317,200 refugees.

107,800 REFUGEES RESETTLED

UNHCR submitted 81,600 refugees to States for resettlement. According to government statistics, 26 countries admitted 107,800 refugees for resettlement during the year, with or without UNHCR's assistance.

Reference:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2020). Global trends: Forced displacement in 2019, 18 June 2020.

Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf>

In the meantime...

Graduation as closure of an exceptional year

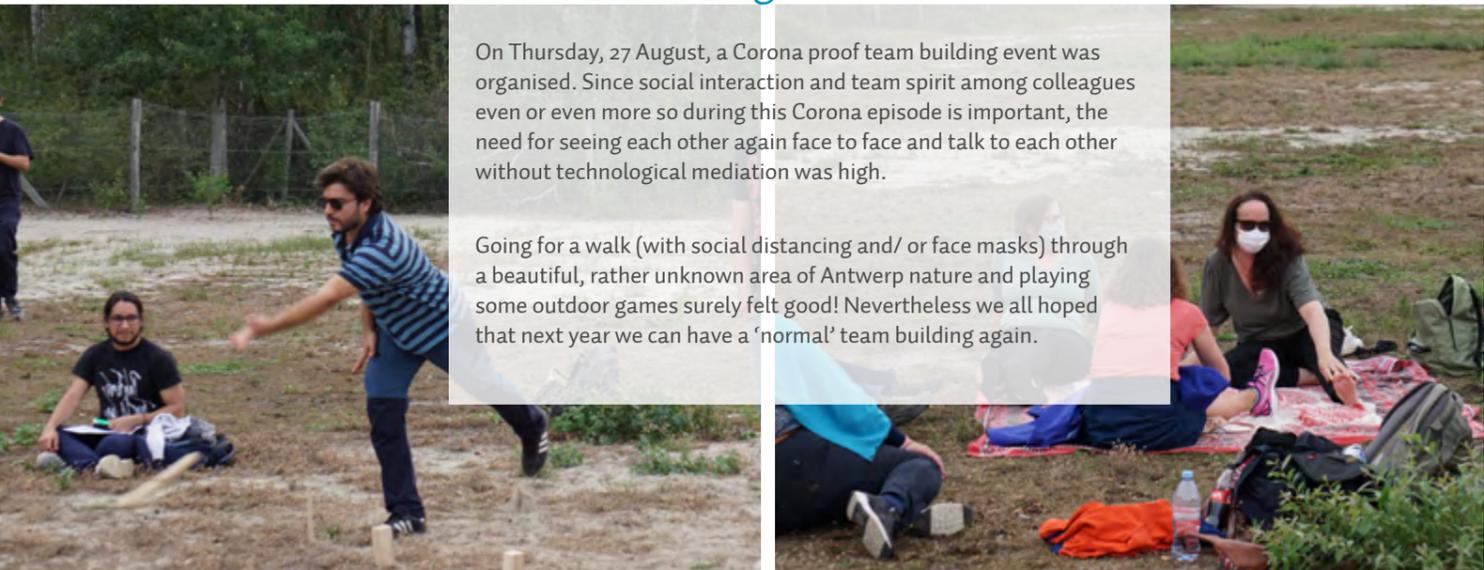


You've made it! What to many of you felt like 'a train' or 'a rollercoaster' has finally reached its destination ... the graduation ceremony! Remember that one year ago you were sitting in the auditorium listening to the graduates of the batch 2019-20 being called out to collect their diploma, to the students' president's speech on how the year was intense but quick and full of hard work and need for stamina. However, nobody knew at that time what a special year it would turn into!

Due to the Corona situation, on September 16, IOB organised a -partly face-to-face and partly livestreamed -graduation ceremony. After a warm welcomed by the IOB chair, the deputy from the Province of Antwerp

awarded the three Prizes for Development Cooperation to Roxana Gómez Valle (GLOB), Angeline Ndabangingi (GOV) and Bienvenue Matungulu Tabu (DEM). In a short video (available on Youtube) each of the award winners explained their dissertation research, the methods used and the policy relevance. As an interlude, a video capturing the highlights of the student IOB year, livened up the graduation ceremony. Finally, Ana Sanchez Ramos on behalf of her fellow students, closed the ceremony with a memorable speech. And then ... the moment everyone had been waiting for, the proclamation of the students' results and the handing over of the diplomas!

Team building in Corona times



On Thursday, 27 August, a Corona proof team building event was organised. Since social interaction and team spirit among colleagues even or even more so during this Corona episode is important, the need for seeing each other again face to face and talk to each other without technological mediation was high.

Going for a walk (with social distancing and/ or face masks) through a beautiful, rather unknown area of Antwerp nature and playing some outdoor games surely felt good! Nevertheless we all hoped that next year we can have a 'normal' team building again.

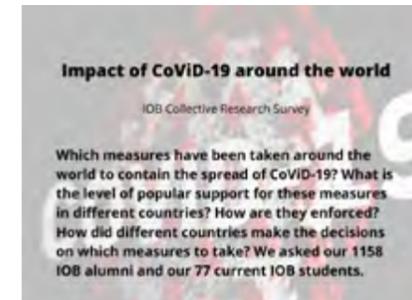


Alumni applause

Given the intensity and the breadth with which the Corona epidemic hit us all, we find that many IOB graduates have been making a contribution through studying and highlighting the effects of COVID-19 as well as the measures taken to combat the pandemic have on the lives of people around the globe.

IOB Alumni collaborative research blogs on COVID

To study which measures have been taken around the world to contain the spread of COVID-19 and what the economic, socio-political and gendered impact of the pandemic and the containment measures was, we have invited all IOB alumni and students to participate in a collaborative research. The collaboration was huge. 218 alumni and students participated by reporting on the situation in their country and contributing to the several blogs being written.



Which measures have been taken around the world to contain the spread of COVID-19? What is the level of popular support for these measures in different countries? How are they enforced? How did different countries make the decisions on which measures to take?

<https://bit.ly/iob-corona-blog-intro>

Authors: Sahawal Alidou, Marijke Verpoorten, Sara Dewachter, Dimitri and 218 IOB alumni / student co-researchers



The COVID-19 pandemic may be endangering progress made in gender equality. Often, gender-differentiated effects intersect with other layers of inequality, such as age, income, ethnicity, marital status, geographical location, etc.

With testimonies from Chile, Bangladesh and Benin.

<https://bit.ly/covid-gender-blog>

Authors: Nathalie Holvoet, Cica Mathilda Dado, Ferdous Farhana Huq and Zjos Vlaminc, but also building on the input of the 218 IOB alumni/students co-researchers!

Other alumni publishing their studies on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic



Alumna Luna K. C. published a piece in the diplomat on "[How COVID-19 worsens gender inequality in Nepal](#)", more specifically by worsening existing gaps in women's education, income, and employment prospects.



How will the COVID-19 pandemic impact migration flows and governance? IOB alumnus Gersán Vásquez Gutiérrez looks at the case of Central American migration to the USA.

<https://bit.ly/iob-blog-covid-migration>

Author: Gersán Vásquez Gutiérrez



Doing remote monitoring in the field during the COVID-19 pandemic presents unique challenges. IOB alumna Sonya Ochaney explains how they adapted and how she hopes for a moment of reflection among the humanitarian community, including the donors.

<http://bit.ly/remote-monitoring-covid>

Author: Sonya Ochaney



Alumnus Muhammad Azizul Islam puts the dire position of Bangladeshi workers in the spotlight in The Conversation: "Coronavirus measures give Bangladeshi workers for global clothing chains a stark choice: disease or starvation"

<http://bit.ly/islam-conversation>

alumni panel

Philippe Henon

MA Public Admin & Mgt 1992 | Belgium
MA in Development Policy

Where do you work?

For over 27 years now (yes, we're getting old) I have been the spokesperson of UNICEF Belgium. As such, I am the public voice (and face) of UNICEF in Belgium, trying to get and keep the world's children on top of your minds.

One advice for the graduating students from IOB ?

Enjoy the ride! Your stay at IOB is not only a possibility to gain knowledge and a degree but also a unique opportunity to meet people from all over the world and build friendships and experiences that might last a lifetime.

Do you think the current COVID-19 pandemic will have an enduring effect on our (personal) lives? Are there any positive side effects to the current situation?

COVID-19 will certainly have a lasting impact on our lives. The pandemic may seem to be under control in Europe, but the poorest, most vulnerable countries will be facing serious challenges. We all have a responsibility to help them overcome this. But like many crises, this is also an opportunity for us to no longer take things for granted, to correct our mistakes and, who knows, express more love. For each other and for life



Martha Engole

GOV 2010 | Uganda

Where do you work?



I am currently working with United Nations World Food Programme (UN WFP) in South Sudan. As Programme Policy Officer, I provide technical oversight to all programmes in the 11 counties of Jonglei State.

One advice for the graduating students from IOB ?

Never restrict your potential. There are limitless opportunities with what you learn at IOB.

How has the IOB experience affected your life/ career?

IOB taught me to think outside the box. Several of the lessons were pragmatic with real world experiences that have shaped my career path. Providing me the opportunity to work in the most difficult conflict and post-conflict countries. It provided valuable insight, not only into managing different situations am faced with, but also to provide realistic solutions in my day to day work.

Do you think the current COVID-19 pandemic will have an enduring effect on our (personal) lives? Are there any positive side effects to the current situation?

COVID-19 pandemic already has a strong enduring effect on everyone mainly ranging from the social and economic structures and many more that will have far reaching effects. A positive side effect is the dynamism with which the world has embraced virtual working tools – something that was never really considered in the past, especially among humanitarians.

Arnel Guevara Fortes

GLOB 1998 | Philippines

Where do you work?

I work in the Upper House of the Congress of the Philippines - the Senate, as Director of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Services.

One advice for the graduating students from IOB ?

Make use of the knowledge and education you have learned at IOB to enhance your competitive advantage in whatever capacity or work you are engaged in, and in promoting international cooperation and good will.

How has the IOB experience affected your life/ career?

The IOB experience enables me to address international and national issues in a broader perspective. It opens a wider horizon for strategic career opportunities both in the public and private sector in my country.



What do you think about the decolonization debate? What does decolonization mean to you? How should development studies be decolonized?

Decolonization is a process whereby a colonizing power either voluntarily (grant of independence) or involuntarily (i.e. rebellion) withdraws from a colony state or country. As for me it should not only address the political sphere but should include the entire dimension of state building, its political, economic and technological, social and cultural dependence. Development studies should focus on bringing the best of people and the state into forging a relationship that is culturally, socially, technologically, economically and politically viable.

How to decolonize development studies?

Perspectives from our IOB community

In the last two years, several civil unrest events and social movements against global inequality and the consequences of neoliberalism have gained people's attention worldwide. In particular, the Black Lives Matter movement highlighted the urgent need to 'decolonize' several aspects of society. These recent events brought discussions on decolonization already being held among several social movements in the South and subaltern segments of society in the North, to the more visible public agenda in the United States and Europe.

However, while the idea of decolonization has gained momentum in the public agenda, understanding the meaning and operationalizing this concept remains an abstract and confusing task, especially for universities in the Global North, where engaging in such a discussion is still a timid endeavor. However, decolonization is not a new topic in the so called Global South, where social movements and some academics have moved into political and conceptual discussions on how to pursue decolonial relations.

In this article Exchange to Change invites members of the IOB community to reflect on the meaning of decolonization and the role it should play within an institute for development studies such as ours, focusing on two main issues: education and research. In the first section, we invited IOB masters, PhD students and staff to share their thoughts and suggestions on different aspects regarding the challenge of decolonizing development studies, followed by alumni perspectives on the same topic.

The importance of critical theoretical and methodological improvements in teaching and research is highlighted. Here, the consulted IOB staff and students stress the relevance of creating broader and deeper dialogues between the academic insights from the Global South and the traditional development frameworks from the North. Furthermore, these insights call for more structural epistemological reflections on and transformations in the way the Institute relates with research partners and people in the field, which urges us to be aware of the legacies of colonialism and neocolonial attitudes in order to transform them.



Miguel Saquimux
IOB Master Student | Guatemala

Decolonization is to be aware of dominant narratives that depart from specific worldviews to shape development, the so infamous development with capital D. It demands boosting local knowledge and questioning international cooperation speeches. It also requires departing from epistemological and ontological inquiries that go in-depth about the subjects' role in the programs and research design and implementation. Also, it questions which role subjects play in the eye of practitioners, researchers and policymakers.

Arguing that we have a decolonial stance means leaving behind the binary discourse of traditional approaches. For instance, it implies avoiding labeling endogenous, non-colonial institutions of a given territory as 'informal or alternative'. Instead, it calls for a comprehensive analysis of the social-political dynamics that are based on those institutions. Following these principles could lead us to visualize the local categories that [re]frame local interpretations and practices.

The decolonial stance considers the subjects as active actors of processes. It demands we stop validating the systematization processes of local knowledge under Western precepts. This means, to force ourselves to deconstruct ways of thinking. Furthermore, it examines how the state-nation proposal has increased inequity and continues to do so because it is based on the modern idea of citizenship. However, who can be considered a citizen within violent dynamics of power that deny identities and do not recognize historical and current political forms of social organization? It also requires a critical reflection about how we understand democracy and whether this understanding is based on collective action or standardized institutional frames.

What does decolonization mean to you?



Eugenia Robles
IOB PhD Student | Bolivia-Peru

From a broader perspective, it means to discover what has been covered. To dig and deconstruct within the many layers - layers of knowledge, history, and perception of the 'self' and the 'other' - that have been imposed by those who invaded and took control over a certain territory and population by force. From a personal perspective, the term forces me to look back and forward. Back into the history of my indigenous ancestors in South America, and question how these layers were constructed in their times, what their narratives were before we were colonized, oppressed, and enslaved by Europe. And forward, because by understanding this difference, I can recognize how much of that still remains within myself and others' behaviors and perceptions of the world in which we currently live.



Tsigie G Kahsay
IOB Master Student | Ethiopia

In my opinion, decolonization is deconstructing the colonial values, attitudes, and theories that develop knowledge, based on the existing institutions. To decolonize is to shift from the colonial and/or Western perspective to indigenous based cultures, ideas and knowledge. When I think of decolonization it also means self-defining, free from colonial assumptions and imposition in terms of social, economic, and political arenas. Projects, policies and ideologies should not be imposed unless they are tailored to a country's environment. Decolonization may not be a one time event but rather a process that involves various daily activities dismantling symbols and histories that have colonial sentiments such as the recent removing of statutes that could cause racist outlooks, as we have seen in the "Black lives Matter" protest following the killing of George Floyd e.g. in the United States, as well as protests in the United Kingdom, Belgium etc.



Johan Bastiaensen
Chair IOB | Belgium

Decolonization refers to the need for a questioning of the -often implicit- claim of universal validity of our (scientific) knowledge through which we unintentionally continue to contribute to an imperialistic vision of Western and white superiority. Our university should acknowledge and cherish that it is and should be a plurality, not (re)producing one single true body of knowledge but organizing a fair and rational encounter of plural knowledges. At IOB, we have adopted a 'mixed-methods approach' to what we -problematically- continue to call 'development studies'. This approach acknowledges that any scientific knowledge claim is inevitably grounded in non-scientific and ultimately political choices (framing of the problems/solutions by the chosen paradigm; selecting and defining legitimate research questions, perspectives on the role of research and researchers, ...). However, in the face of the complexity and the political nature of societal processes, no one is in a position to claim the final, true knowledge. Clearly, in the context of 'development studies', there is a great risk of an enduring colonial practice of imposing our views on the 'development' of the so-called 'South', also and possibly even more dangerously by well-intended 'post-colonial' scholars. (I deliberately put keywords between inverted commas to underline the charged significance of the terminologies.) I agree with EADI president Henning Melber who, in his acceptance speech at his recent re-election, claimed a need to 'overcome developmentalism' and to open up for dialogue with, and questioning by, perspectives going 'beyond the confinements of the world views dominating and resembling the Anthropocene to create truly sustainable alternatives in an era of post-development leaving behind the growth obsession.'

In the face of today's coupled planetary crises, the 'wisdom of the baobab', i.e. together we know more than alone, applies more than ever (see IOB's Research Policy). Returning to the question of decolonization, of course, we must recognize that the violence and oppression of the imperial project continues to color and bias worldwide knowledge encounters -even in regions where colonization seems a remnant of a long distant past. Therefore, decolonization is a precondition for a truly global reflection and cooperation around the joint transformation of the current stalemate. Paradoxically, it is a condition for scholars from the 'North' to be able to enter into refreshing, creative knowledge encounters. Much more interesting and promising than the unilateral monologues of the imperial project.



Miguel Saquimux
IOB Master Student | Guatemala

Of course, it is possible and desirable. However, it depends on all parties involved being willing to self-reflect on our beliefs and values. For the patriarchal beliefs and values, it is not enough to recognize them; it is imperative to address them with a critical view and political actions.

It could start with considering the concept of race and contemplating its implications for research and practice. As Charles W. Mills (1998) argues, “room has to be made for race as both real and unreal: that race can be ontological without being biological, metaphysical without being physical, existential without being essential, shaping one’s being without being in one’s shape” (p. xiv).

It is necessary to include Critical Racial Studies and Critical Development Studies in the syllabus to be able to make broader analyses regarding the intersections that every research process, development program or initiative has.

The former raises awareness about how inequities are rooted in the social, economic, and legal differences that the white gaze (Pailey, 2019) has created, and how they continue perpetuating disparity between races. We can see these disparities in labour markets and politics, poverty and criminality indexes, and access to education, health, and leisure. The latter relies on the nature of the global capitalist system, stressing the crucial importance of historical, social-

cultural, economic, and political contexts when critically analyzing power in development theories and development practices, as IOB is currently doing in Module I – Theories of Development. Moreover, it brings analyses of the dynamics associated with the agrarian and rural life that are also essential to development processes, trying to avoid the modernizing idea that all rural areas need to be urbanized. Also, it demands consideration of the emergence of powerful resistance movements that have reframed narratives and practices around the world.

It is also necessary to have a proactive position to boost feminism and gender literature together with intellectuals who are not part of academia because they have not studied formally. The purpose is to carry out comprehensive analyses that embrace intersectionality—aiming to reduce the gap between academic and policy research. It is a duty for all of us to be linked to these processes to boost interactions and start to discuss intensely our roles as researchers, practitioners, or policymakers. We must think with the subjects of knowledge rather than think for or on behalf of them. To create knowledges, not to apply standardized formulas.



Tsigie G Kahsay
IOB Master Student | Ethiopia

Yes, it is possible to build a decolonial way of teaching, a mechanism where the teachers engage in various opposing histories and literatures across the globe, and let their students critically examine and question the reasoning of their own histories. As there is no single universal history (no ‘one size fits all’), the real life cases for instance of poverty, inequality, health, and policies, etc. should not be merely from the Global South but also from the ‘developed’ countries, not in relation with ‘developing’ countries, but instead analyzing them in their own right. The programs/policies we took as examples from the developing countries in many cases are regarded as they are with limitations in their design or implementation process, leaving out the success stories particularly in terms of democracy, the rule of law, legitimacy, human rights,

and so on. The curriculum on development studies should relate to different contexts not in the sense of hierarchical relations but as alternative ideas for a certain approach to solving problems. As per the economic and political system across the globe, the theories should necessarily align with the country’s setting. The references and books are good if they include the developing context and authors. For example, the fact that most of the articles and books are more from Western/Northern authors does not help to critically scrutinize the discourse and contest the colonization conventions. Hence, to avoid these divergent understandings of concepts, there should be a balance of references written by authors from the Global South. This advances debates on these literatures developed by these authors based on different views, observation and framing.

Is it possible to build a decolonial way of teaching in development studies? What would it look like?



Eugenia Robles
IOB PhD Student | Bolivia-Peru

First and foremost, it is important to start with a critical view of what is development and, on the one hand, under which measures we consider certain countries as ‘developed and developing’. On the other, to question who has determined these measures. There is not one model of development. There are many, but those that do not align with the western idea of development have been invalidated. Students who come from overseas are a key element in helping nurture a dialogue by analyzing their local experiences of development. Students are there not only to learn but to teach. Together with professors, they can start deconstructing local and global knowledge, in order to bring a better and more innovative understanding of what development is. However, if the university and professors teaching these subjects have not gone through a reflexive process of what it means to decolonize not only their own educational system, but also their mindset in these areas of studies themselves, then there is no hope that a decolonial teaching process can be successful.



Johan Bastiaensen
Chair IOB | Belgium

Yes, clearly we can, and even if we at IOB surely don’t always fully succeed in this, I believe it is deeply rooted in one of the key strings of IOB DNA. For education, I refer here to IOB’s recognition that coming to study at IOB in Antwerp is much more than just the experience of following the programs at our institute, and that the courses are not about the unidirectional transfer of knowledge from the professors to the students. We speak of and actively cultivate what we call ‘the IOB-community’, i.e. a community of students, assistants, researchers and professors, and we fully acknowledge that all of us bring valuable knowledge and wisdom to the IOB, and that we all learn from each other, while the impact of our efforts ultimately also depends upon cooperation among all of us, often even beyond the formal (time) framework of the study in Antwerp. This is also why we are now actively investing in the IOB alumni-network, while some graduates are active in our long-term partner institutions and in this way are actively involved in future IOB research and education both in their own regions and Belgium. In our programs, we adhere

to a student-activating methodology and give room to personal trajectories, while inviting the students to present and discuss their views in class. If this works well, the IOB Masters really become the spaces of knowledge encounters which make for the fascinating learning experience that the programs should be. It is this which has always motivated me strongly as a professor at IOB and from which I have also personally learned significantly. While at the university in Antwerp as a student myself, I was introduced to ‘development’ and emancipation by reading Paulo Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of the oppressed’ for my first paper. Freire’s rejection of the banking model of education (=vertical-hierarchical knowledge from the knowable to the unknowable) and his argument for a mutually liberating relational-dialogic pedagogical model have marked me forever. It remains highly recommendable literature today, in particular also in the context of the reflections about decolonization. My suggestion to all IOB students: pay respect, but not deference to your professors, and give them a good challenge while passing through Antwerp.



Eugenia Robles
IOB PhD Student | Bolivia-Peru

It is a delicate and difficult task, as the act of researching subjects or territories can sometimes be considered a colonizing act itself. As outsiders, it is important to empathize, integrate and connect with the people and territories of our research, to learn instead of teach. Subsequently, when it comes to writing and publishing our findings, we are left with theories and resources that in many cases do not apply to what we would like to transmit. Academic writing tends to be an act of recycling from different theories and contributions. My experience is that in their majority these articles are being written from a western point of view of what a developing country in the Global South is. By this I do not want to invalidate their knowledge, there is indeed much value in their analysis. However, an integration of academic writing from academics from the Global South, should be more present. Unfortunately, most of that production is not available in English and academic journals of 'weight' will have requirements that most universities overseas are unable to meet. Thus, this knowledge production remains encapsulated within its local borders and will

hardly have a global reach in terms of what are considered today valid narratives with substantial impact on academia.

As for regional contexts – and this is a key element- they have to give more support to the involvement of research and academic knowledge production. A second step is to consider this knowledge as a basis for decision making. And by this I do not want to make the mistake of suggesting that academic knowledge should be politicized, because that would create a biased and controlled knowledge production. However, when there is investment in the generation of scientific and social research with local professionals and local knowledge, it is difficult to impose and accept a different narrative. The best that could happen is that researchers from outside will come and create a diverse two-way dialogue, which would lead to the production of better knowledge, and to the advancement of analysis. There is little to no importance given to the role of research and academia as a consulting method for decision makers. More value should be given to young professionals who want to engage in this path.

Is it possible to decolonize research in development studies? How could that happen and what role should the regional contexts play?



Tsigie G Kahsay
IOB Master Student | Ethiopia

I think it is possible. In the past, most research was done by Western authors, especially the research in developing countries focussed on matters related to economics or the cultural or political problems of a country. The participation of the local actors, not only as part of the research interview/group discussions, but as a main researcher in local problems, affects the way of framing and defining the research problems. Therefore, enhancing the ownership and authorship of knowledge, which in turn solves the community's problems better and faster, is necessary. In terms of language and communication, it is not as simple as talking with the external researcher to understand it in-depth. Most of the articles and books of our professors are engaged in the developing countries to evaluate the system and institutions based on the Western values/criteria. I

believe this is not an effective way of problem solving approaches, as at the same time it is imposing externally generated procedures that fail to acknowledge the local perspectives. Therefore, research should be conducted based on the perceptions and opinions of the grass root level and produce indigenous-based knowledge. In my view, it is important that researchers interact with the participants and understand their interests, actions and perceptions within their own local context. The object-subject interaction helps to develop grounded theories and ideas that match with the local background and the local problem. The other mechanism can be conducting research on societal values (the informal, traditional/cultural) and transforming them into a more formal governing system. For many of these problems, the society has its own way of mitigating problems, so focusing on developing these traditional mechanisms and scaling up to the macro level plays a significant role in development.



Johan Bastiaensen
Chair IOB | Belgium

If it is not possible, I fear for the future of 'development studies'. This question might be an oxymoron, since decolonization of 'development studies' might require a name change, e.g. 'how to develop studies'. I start from the 'mixed methods' approach of IOB and the implied recognition of ontological-epistemological diversity in all research, thus the need to open up our specific theoretical frameworks and knowledge generating processes to other frameworks of knowledge. For IOB, long term cooperation with Southern academics is a crucial part of this opening up. Yet, we should not lock ourselves into a binary 'decolonial' framework, where all diversity and unequal power relationships are subsumed in the contradiction between the dominating 'North' and the dominated 'South'. The colonial heritage needs to be taken into account, but it will not solve the generic problem of dealing with the omnipresent, diverse problems of unequal power and domination in research. This calls for a more democratic, relational way to open up the process of research in

order to give visibility and value to all stakeholders and put our perspectives in dialogue with this diversity of stakeholders. This is a complex political challenge, but one that can also save our work as a European, albeit networked 'development studies' (sic) institute, when changing world power relations further undermine our previously unchallenged relevance to the extent that it came with gradually obsolete frameworks of domination. Long term research cooperation with scholars from the 'South' is critical to bring in alternative perspectives in order to define/frame issues for research on their own as well as within our -increasingly interrelated- contexts. But, just as any Northern academic scholar should not automatically be condemned for promoting 'colonial perspectives', neither should all Southern scholars be a priori assumed to represent a 'decolonial perspective'. Safeguarding academic responsibility for promoting a level playing field for adequate knowledge encounters can and should be a shared task for cooperating academics anywhere in the world. Decolonization -as overcoming the continuing detrimental impact of historical domination- is a precondition for truly joining academic and other forces in this critical endeavour.



Miguel Saquimux
IOB Master Student | Guatemala

Decolonial research has already been done for decades. However, it remains unknown for several practitioners and policymakers. Thanks to the effort of numerous researchers, practitioners and policymakers with critical thinking around the world, the decolonization stance has begun to be an essential stance opposing dominant narratives.

The advantage that critical researchers and policymakers have is that they interact with the subjects in the field and can become part of the grassroots processes that can force changes in narratives and practices, translating this in the field as better service delivery. This has already been done around the world, primarily through collective-action processes.

The research in development studies can be decolonial if it starts to engage with social movements and non-colonial institutions. Also, if it is willing to inquire about western knowledge as it does with local and ancestral knowledges, especially in these times of instability, when we hear again that there are unique solutions to everyone's problems. We have the opportunity to change narratives around specific issues that can transform our everyday lives.

Nevertheless, we have to remember that we are embedded in foundational narratives that are the positivistic paradigm's heritage.

Likewise, these are conditioning the way we view reality, a key element of being politically aware, from in our daily conversations to our academic papers. If we do so, we will contest dominant narratives that legitimize existing power relationships by upholding them and/or making them seem immutable, and additionally counter the obvious dominant narratives around development that have established specific and limited notions of progress according to specific worldviews. Nonetheless, we cannot deny that there are space-times where it is not possible to pose these reflections due to authoritarian regimes, or founding narratives that continue being hegemonic, and there is no space for diversity and critical thinking.

It is imperative to elude the neoliberal proposal of fixed trajectories of economic growth and opening and liberalizing markets that have only increased inequalities and disenfranchised historical oppressed groups. Also, such fixed trajectories have also created a narrative that features people as passive and unable to make decisions.

It is not just possible and desirable to decolonize development studies; there is an urgent need for some development approaches to critically review their ontological and epistemological stances. In this way, some anthropological, economic, political and sociological schools have recently made efforts to circumvent the Western totalization of what is development. We cannot continue working in this field without asking ourselves constantly: what are we doing to decolonize development?

The year 2019-2020



"It feels like it was yesterday when I was trying to grasp what the professors said about culture and poverty thingy in the first module, then suddenly, it's dissertation time."

"Dynamic, enriching and intense"

"From the learning pressure to missing family, COVID-19 lockdown, and travel restrictions to new learning methods and environment and knowledge, I have had highs and lows at IOB. However, I had a glorious learning experience at IOB. COVID-19 restricted fieldwork but opened fresh opportunities for online learning. Above all, I value the flexible, excellent quality, and intercultural learning environment at IOB."

"Well, in one sentence, this year is one of the best years of my life ever. I enjoyed every second that I lived here."

"Embracing diversity and inclusion, new knowledge, and self-discovery."

"Exciting, challenging incredible"

"Multicultural, challenging, transformative"

"IOB has widened my perspective on development challenges and taught me that learning is a fun but never-ending process!"

"How to interact with people from diverse multicultural backgrounds, the ability to provide my own critics, ideas, and opinions on different matters!"

#Critical Reasoning



Alumni perspectives on decolonization

Exchange to Change has also invited its alumni to share their perspectives on what they feel decolonization of education and research in development studies should be, how important they feel this is for an institute like IOB and whether they have some interesting tips and good practices for IOB to build on in its process towards decolonizing its education and research.

First, unlike the last call for contributions – i.e. on impact of COVID around the world, which generated a huge response from alumni, the invitation to share their perspective on decolonization induced far fewer response. Some twenty alumni from Ecuador, Nicaragua, Belgium, Colombia, Uganda, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bolivia, South Africa, Madagascar responded and shared their view on the topic, possibly indicating the degree of complexity and novelty of the topic, rather than a disinterest altogether? In any case, we thank the alumni that have responded and share some of their interesting perspectives and ideas on the topic.

The alumni who shared their view on the topic are mostly very much convinced of the importance of starting a decolonizing process for a development institute like IOB, with an overwhelming 88 percent of those alumni thinking it's very important for IOB to embark on a decolonization process.

The graphs below show the alumni perspectives on Decolonising Education and Research.

(Source: survey among IOB alumni & students. The size of the dimension in the pie chart represents how often this dimension is being mentioned by alumni in their responses)

Decolonizing education

But what does it actually mean, decolonizing development studies? And how do you go about working towards decolonized forms of teaching and research? Based on the alumni perspectives, we were able to distill seven different main dimensions which were mentioned as part of what they consider decolonized education (see graph below). The most frequently mentioned dimension of decolonizing education is to have *more theories and perspectives from outside the 'Western' literature* included and to have *more lecturers from the South* teaching those perspectives. Often mentioned concomitantly is to take a *more critical perspective towards those Western or hegemonical theories* and invite students to do the same. Additionally, another comment regards precisely loosening the idea of student/ teacher, but rather work towards *learning spaces where all involved learn from each other*, from different types of knowledge, from different parts of the world and from lived experiences. The latter should also include *contextualizing* existing theories and knowledge to different contexts as well as *broadening development studies*, to also learn from the North as part of 'development studies', as not only the South should serve as case studies for development, but the North can also be studied as case studies for 'development' in action. Finally, several alumni also pointed out the importance of *language and narrative*, where for example stereotypes should be avoided by not using only certain case studies to illustrate corruption, or where the concepts 'developing' and 'development' should perhaps be rethought through different wordings.

Broaden development beyond developing countries, also in the north, not only 'developing'

"There could be programmes where students from the South study what is happening in the North. (...) What development studies (should) do is analyze social and relational processes whose study is equally relevant in any context."

Contextualise

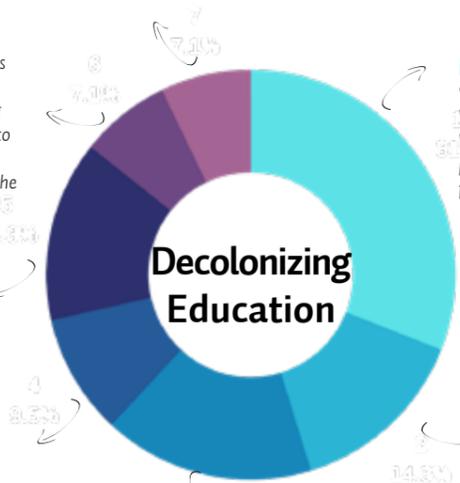
"It should involve training programs and styles that allows space for reflection of ideas/ issues through contextual relevant techniques and ideas. For instance when training Tanzanians on good governance the training should seek to identify what good leadership means to them rather than teaching them on what "ideal" good governance is from the Western perspective."

Dialogue | Co-creation

"Create a dialogue-based learning environment for all, instead of any model that presupposes some teaching and others learning."

Language matters

"To start with, we should use another jargon. Although there is not yet a good alternative for 'development studies', we have to decolonize the language we use when talking about 'development'."



More theories from the South

"The material in IOB's curriculum is mostly from Western or sometimes Latin scholars, given by Western scholars. Education needs a plurality of perspectives. Thus, we need teachers and materials from many different places around the world."

More voices from the South

"Adding teachers from different parts of the world could be a good way to introduce new perspectives."

Critical vis-à-vis hegemonial theories

"Please think about teaching more from the school of Postdevelopment and degrowth, and incorporate ecological and anti-capitalist perspectives."

Decolonising research

Apart from the question how to decolonize education, alumni were also invited to share their perspectives on what decolonized research should look like. The graph below again summarizes the main dimensions put forward. First of all, several alumni stated that research in development studies should *benefit people in the South* and not merely serve academic output of Northern based researchers. Linked to that, it was often pointed out that research should *involve researchers from the South, being involved throughout the entire research process*, i.e. research design, data collection, analysis and presentation of the results leading to academic output, not only for data collection as is often the case now. Likewise, stakeholders should not be regarded as mere respondents, but research should recognize *the agency of the persons involved* in the research project. Some alumni highlighted that the first point of decolonization starts actually with the *identification of the research question*, which is often decided by a Northern based university or think tank, as they receive the research funding and hence hold the purse strings. Some also called for, similar to education, *move beyond the North/ South distinction* entrenched in development studies, and study development in all its perspectives all over the

world, for example also having researchers from the South studying development topics in the North. Moving further along from the research question, to the theories underpinning the study, several alumni suggest a greater *openness to other types of knowledge and theories*, than the ones in the hegemonic theoretical framework, leaving room for *co-creation of new knowledge* and theories based on theories from all over the world and from in depth understanding of the local context. Similarly, alumni propose to also *broaden the scope of methodologies* used in research projects to other types of methodologies which might be better suited to investigating the topic under study. Researchers should also acknowledge and *make explicit their own positionality* to others involved in the research process. Finally, some alumni also highlighted a need to change the *academic system itself*, with the journals and peer reviewers being dominated by Western based academia.

Besides perspectives and ideas on how to decolonize education, alumni have also provided a wealth of authors, blogs articles and good practices (full list available upon request) to inspire IOB on its journey towards more decolonized education and research. Alumni who have indicated to be interested to engage in the next steps of our process towards decolonizing IOB education and research will be invited to participate again.

Certainly enough food for thought!



Acknowledge own positionality

"The researcher has to acknowledge their own positionality that influences the research, knowing that there is no neutrality."

Academic system itself (peer reviews, journals)

"The academic system also needs to be decolonized, the percentage of black or indigenous peer reviews is insignificant."

Value other methodologies

"It is important to recognize other ways of doing research, to recognize other methodologies that break with the hegemonic quantitative scheme. It is important to question, first, from the academy, the ways in which research is carried out, giving value to qualitative research, to feminist methodologies that are methodologies that have another way of looking at society, methodologies that have other ways of telling stories."

Exchange of knowledges/ co-creation

"Promoting processes of co-creation of knowledge within research processes (vs. extractivism), recognizing that there is no one superior type of knowledge, being modest and respectful."

Beyond the North/South distinction

"We should also think about what 'development' actually means. Is there no poverty in the West? Is there no corruption, war and exclusion? What makes these topics fall under development when it's in Zimbabwe, but not when it's in Brussels? If Western scholars are so happy to go to 'developing countries' to do research, should we think about 1) giving people from that country the opportunity to do that research 2) give people from 'developing countries' the opportunity to travel to the West to do research on development in Brussels/New York/...?"

Benefitting the people in the South

"Research often benefits the researcher (getting grants, building up a CV, a new experience, ...). Every research should ask themselves: who is benefiting from the research?"

Researchers from the South throughout the full process

"More equity between researchers from the North and South (in terms of involvement in research design and implementations, access to financial resources)."

Agency of people involved

"Recognize the agency of the participants in the research beyond the informed consent."

Research questions

"Development always asks what we can change in the developing country to have a better outcome. Might we ask how we ourselves should change? What trade policies should we have? How can current international organisations be decolonized? These topics are a lot more difficult than starting a project in a village in Congo. But if we ignore these topics, then what is even the point?"



IOB
Institute of Development Policy
University of Antwerp