



BOSTON COLLEGE  
School of Social Work



Crisis Migration:  
Our Collective Response

# Crisis Migration by the Numbers

100 MILLION

People forced to flee their homes worldwide

24%

BCSSW faculty researching and responding  
to crisis migration

114

Field placements focused on the migrant  
and refugee population

More than 100 million people are displaced today and on the move. The drivers are many. War. Ethnic conflict. Political turmoil. Hurricanes and typhoons. Droughts. Social and religious oppression. Boston College School of Social Work is meeting this moment to address the compound needs of crisis migrants.

## Boston College School of Social Work (BCSSW) is pushing the boundaries of social intervention research through inventive collaborations that span communities in sub-Saharan Africa, the U.S., and Latin America.

Learning from her long-standing interventions in Sierra Leone and Rwanda, **Theresa Betancourt's** Research Program on Children in Adversity is working to improve family functioning in Somali Bantu and Bhutanese migrant communities in Maine and Massachusetts. Betancourt and her collaborators are also re-designing the FSI-R intervention to meet the needs of Afghan families that arrived in the United States.

The political crisis in Venezuela has produced nearly seven million migrants, many of whom are now living in Colombia and Florida. With support from the Hilton Foundation, **María Piñeros-Leaño** and colleagues are adapting the FSI-R intervention for Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and the Youth Readiness Intervention with internally displaced Colombian families.

To address the trauma and stress of migration and the adverse behaviors that often result from being uprooted from your home, **Christopher Salas-Wright** examines pre- and post-migration factors affecting mental health and substance misuse. His research zeroes in on the Venezuelan migrant families in Miami displaced by political instability and Puerto Rican migrants in Florida uprooted by Hurricane Maria.

The response to crisis migration is equally essential when people are en route. People on the move reside in refugee camps and other spaces where humanitarian assistance is provided, including ad hoc education and health. **Tom Crea** and **Praveen Kumar** have responded to such conditions. Crea and colleagues working with the Jesuit Refugee Service helped design inclusive special education programs for refugee youth in Kenya. Similarly, Kumar and colleagues use social network analysis and community-based system dynamics to discern adoption patterns and sustained use of clean cooking systems in Rwanda. **Alejandro Olayo-Méndez, S.J.**, led a Jesuit network of researchers from 17 countries covering Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America in a study of employment, legal, and policy regimes governing migrants and refugees.

Also essential is a workforce that is high functioning and can provide quality humanitarian assistance to address the basic needs as well as the trauma and stress of forced displacement. Boston College's Center for Digital Innovation and Learning, in collaboration with Olayo-Méndez, Crea, **Maryanne Loughry**, and **Lyndsey McMahan**, developed a professionally curated online program on humanitarian assistance for people working in humanitarian crises. Similarly, **Scott Easton**, **Kathleen Flinton**, and **Sue Coleman** spearheaded an initiative to integrate trauma-informed theory, principles, and practice into the curriculum, field education, and research for MSW students in Global Practice and our five other fields of practice. And Olayo-Méndez and Loughry have expanded our curriculum on policy and on-the-ground interventions for crisis migration through courses in Washington, D.C., and the border between San Diego and Tijuana.

As researchers, BCSSW faculty are working to improve the lives of people on the move who have been forced to leave their homes, livelihoods, and cultures. They are identifying specific challenges facing this particularly vulnerable population, whether it's substance use disorder, depression, or cultural stress, and designing novel interventions to strengthen their health and well-being. As teachers, BCSSW faculty are preparing the next generation of social work practitioners to respond to complex humanitarian crises in every corner of the world, helping them build the skills to work in places as diverse as refugee camps and non-governmental organizations. Twenty-five Global Practice MSW students are dispersed across the globe, and 50% of them are interning in agencies addressing the needs of refugees and migrants. They are in countries including Lebanon, Uganda, Perú, Greece, Romania, Indonesia, and Switzerland. More than 100 million people are displaced today, and BCSSW is working to understand—and respond to—their needs.

— Gautam N. Yadama, Dean

# One school. 42 countries served. A world of difference.



**22** Published faculty papers or projects on international crisis migration



Working with the Athens emergency services team to assist newly arrived refugees

Supporting the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network activities for urban refugees in Thailand

MIGRANT CAMP  
IN MÉXICO

## Where we respond to crisis migration

### Faculty Project Locations

#### NORTH AMERICA

Canada  
México  
United States:  
Arizona  
California  
Florida  
Maine  
Massachusetts  
Puerto Rico  
Texas  
Washington, D.C.  
Wisconsin

#### CENTRAL AMERICA

Costa Rica  
Nicaragua

#### CARIBBEAN

Aruba and Curacao  
Dominican Republic  
Haiti  
Trinidad and Tobago

#### SOUTH AMERICA

Argentina  
Brazil  
Chile  
Colombia  
Ecuador  
Guyana  
Perú  
Uruguay  
Venezuela

#### EUROPE

Italy  
United Kingdom

#### AFRICA

Kenya  
Malawi  
Rwanda  
Somalia  
South Africa

#### MIDDLE EAST

Afghanistan  
Jordan  
Palestinian Territories

#### ASIA

Bhutan  
Hong Kong  
Timor-Leste  
Vietnam

#### AUSTRALIA

#### OCEANIA

Papua New Guinea

### Global Practice Student Placements

#### NORTH AMERICA

United States:  
California  
New York

#### SOUTH AMERICA

Perú

#### EUROPE

Greece  
Romania  
Switzerland

#### AFRICA

Sierra Leone  
Uganda

#### MIDDLE EAST

Lebanon

#### ASIA

Indonesia  
Thailand

## Faculty Projects

BCSSW faculty are committed to improving the lives of the most vulnerable. In response to the growing issue of crisis migration, they are designing interventions and solutions to reach those most affected by war, natural disasters, political upheaval, and other crises around the world.





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## Theresa Betancourt

### PROJECTS

**Strengthening Afghan Evacuees: A Community-Based Family Strengthening Intervention**

**Youth FORWARD Follow-Up Study: Measuring the Impact of an Intervention to Promote Mental Health and Economic Self-Sufficiency in War-Affected Youth**

**Using Human-Centered Design and Co-Design Methodology to Engage Resettled Refugee Communities in Developing a Digital App for the Family Strengthening Intervention for Refugees**

### INTERVENTION

Family strengthening intervention for refugees

### LOCATIONS

Maine and Massachusetts

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**T**he Research Program on Children and Adversity (RPCA), led by Salem Professor in Global Practice Theresa Betancourt, has developed the family strengthening intervention for refugees—a family-based program that supports healthy parent-child relationships and draws from family strengths learned in the process of resettlement to help newly arriving families in the U.S. Since its inception in 2005, the program has bolstered the health and well-being of over 200 refugee families who have resettled in Maine and Massachusetts. Data from a pilot study that ran from 2013 to 2016 in Somali Bantu and Bhutanese communities showed that the program improved rates of family feasibility and acceptability, lowered rates of traumatic stress reactions for children, and decreased depression symptoms in youth. Most recently, the intervention was adapted to meet the urgent needs of Afghan families who were forced to leave their homeland in 2021. RPCA is currently conducting new research focused on adapting the program into a family-and-interventionist-facing digital application and hopes to develop a collective with refugee health organizations that can support the expansion and adaption of FSI-R across the U.S.



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## Tom Crea

### PROJECTS

**Inclusion & Well-Being of Children with Special Needs in Kakuma Refugee Camp**

**Clocking in: Employment Outcomes for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Exiting Care in the United States**

**Job Retention Among Resettled Refugees in the United States: The Importance of Place and Context**

### INTERVENTION

Social and educational support for refugee and unaccompanied immigrant youth

### LOCATIONS

United States, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Jordan

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**P**rofessor Thomas Crea's work primarily focuses on providing social and educational support for young refugees and unaccompanied immigrants. He has partnered with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and the International Institute of New England to develop programs for these populations in the United States, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and Jordan. In collaboration with the JRS, he has studied and implemented education models for refugee youth: he evaluated hybrid models of education for refugees in higher education; developed the JRS Pathfinder Programme, a career incubator for refugees in sub-Saharan Africa; and implemented inclusive special education programs for refugee youth in the Kakuma Refugee Camp.



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## Kathleen Flinton

PROJECT

**Refugee Resilience and Spirituality: Harnessing Social and Cultural Coping Strategies**

INTERVENTION

Culturally responsive, trauma-informed treatment to migrants and asylum seekers, training clinicians and professionals on vicarious trauma

LOCATION

Massachusetts

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**K**athleen Flinton, an assistant professor of the practice, provides culturally responsive mental health treatment to refugees and asylum seekers that addresses experiences of trauma and provides support as they remake their lives in a new country. She presents affidavits documenting the psychological impact of human rights abuses in accordance with the Istanbul Protocol and serves as an expert witness

on the impact of trauma and torture in support of the claims of asylum seekers in federal immigration court. She also trains providers and professionals working with refugees and asylum seekers to manage vicarious trauma and provide trauma-informed treatment.

In addition, she provides training to asylum officers who adjudicate asylum claims on topics including forensics, trauma-informed interviewing, and managing vicarious trauma.

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## Praveen Kumar

PROJECT

**Integrating Systems Science Approach to Enhance Adoption and Sustained Use of Cleaner Stoves in Kigeme Refugee Camp**

INTERVENTION

Clean energy usage in the Kigeme Refugee Camp in Rwanda

LOCATION

Rwanda

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**A**ssistant Professor Praveen Kumar has worked with refugees and humanitarian aid workers to implement clean energy interventions. One new study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, applied community-based system dynamics and egocentric social network analysis to examine the factors that impact the adoption and use of cleaner cooking systems at the Kigeme Refugee Camp in Rwanda. Preliminary findings from the study, which relied on data from 935 women refugees in the camp, show that structure and composition of personal networks play a significant role in the adoption of cleaner stoves. For example, women in the camp who adopted cleaner cooking systems reported a significantly higher number of

peers outside the camp than their counterparts who did not adopt cleaner stoves.

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## Maryanne Loughry

### PROJECTS

**'These Don't Look Like Children to Me':  
Age Assessment of Unaccompanied Children  
and Separated Children**

**Environmental Risk: Urban Refugees'  
Struggles to Build Livelihoods in South Africa**

### INTERVENTION

Mental health and migration

### LOCATIONS

North America, Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia

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**P**art-time faculty member Maryanne Loughry co-teaches a course on migration at BC titled Migration, Politics, and Social Work, and teaches at the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford International Summer School in Forced Migration. Her current research focuses on the psychopathology of people who have been displaced by climate change events in the Pacific. She chairs the Jesuit Refugee Service advisory committee on mental health and psychosocial support, and facilitates connections between BC faculty and staff with interests in migration and the JRS in different countries. She has worked in many settings including Hong Kong, Vietnam, the Palestinian Territories, the United Kingdom, Australia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Rome, Arizona, Texas, Washington, D.C., and Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. In 2010, for the Queen's Birthday Honours, she was awarded the Order of Australia for her service to displaced persons.



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## Alejandro Olayo-Méndez, S.J.

### PROJECTS

**Programa de la Frontera Sur**

**A Population in Peril: A Health Crisis  
among Asylum Seekers on the Northern  
Border of México**

**La Red Jesuita con Migrantes - Latin America  
(Jesuit Network with Migrants - Latin America)**

### INTERVENTION

Migration and humanitarian aid

### LOCATIONS

North and South America

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**A**ssistant Professor Alejandro Olayo-Méndez's research centers on understanding the interactions between migrants and humanitarian aid organizations in the United States, Caribbean, and Latin America. In the past, he has collaborated with colleagues from other universities to conduct a pilot study analyzing the educational needs of children in shelters in Ciudad Juárez, México. He is now researching mental health needs and interventions for migrants moving along migration routes in Central America.



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## María Piñeros-Leaño

### PROJECTS

**Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Childhood Growth Trajectories**

**“I Don’t Have Time to be Sad”: Experiences and Perceptions of Sadness Among Latina Mothers**

**Depressive Symptoms and Emotional Distress of Transnational Mothers: A Scoping Review**

### INTERVENTION

**“Family Strengthening Intervention for Early Childhood Development”**

**“Youth Readiness Intervention”**

### LOCATION

Colombia

Assistant Professor María Piñeros-Leaño and her colleagues are culturally adapting and piloting two trauma-informed, evidence-based interventions to meet the needs of internally displaced persons and Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. Both interventions—the Family Strengthening Intervention for Early Childhood Development for Venezuelan migrants and the Youth Readiness Intervention for internally displaced people in Colombia as well as young Venezuelan migrants—are designed to improve the mental health and well-being of children, youth, and families affected by armed conflict and forced migration. Findings from this study, which will use a community-based participatory research approach and the ADAPT-ITT framework, will provide initial evidence about the effectiveness of these interventions to improve outcomes among Venezuelan families, Venezuelan youth, and internally displaced people in Colombia. It is expected that this evidence will help scale these interventions and integrate them into the Colombian social service delivery system.



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## Christopher Salas-Wright

### PROJECTS

**The Behavioral Health of Venezuelan Families in Diaspora: A Cross-National Study of Stress and Resilience**

**Post-Maria Puerto Rican Families Relocated to Florida: A Multisite Study of Alcohol Misuse and Mental Health**

**Preventing Alcohol and Other Drug Use and Violence among Latino Youth**

### INTERVENTION

Substance use intervention in migrants

### LOCATION

United States and Colombia

Professor Christopher Salas-Wright is currently the principal investigator of three studies funded by the National Institutes of Health that are focused on Latin American immigrant populations. The first is a cross-national study of Venezuelan migrants who have relocated to diasporas within the United States and Colombia as a result of humanitarian crises. It is aimed at examining pre- and post-migration factors that affect mental health, with a particular focus on the impact of exposure to hunger, violence, and political persecution. The second study examines the pre- and post-migration experiences of Puerto Rican migrants who relocated to Florida following Hurricane Maria, with an emphasis on their experiences with alcohol use and mental health. Lastly, Salas-Wright is working to adapt a school-based substance use intervention model developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to address the needs of Venezuelan youth who recently arrived in the U.S. The intervention aims to include violence prevention and is currently being piloted online with 11-to-14-year-olds who have been in the U.S. for no longer than two years.



WORKING TOGETHER  
IN MÉXICO



COLLABORATING IN RWANDA

## In the Classroom



At BCSSW, our faculty are conducting groundbreaking international research on crisis migration and bringing it to the classroom, transforming the ways our students learn and respond to global challenges.

### Certificate

- MSW students can earn a certificate in Refugees and Immigrants

### Travel courses

- Migration, Politics, and Social Work in Washington, D.C.
- Interdisciplinary Approaches to Borderlands and Human Mobility at the San Diego/Tijuana Border

### Courses related to refugees and crisis migration

- Immigrants & Refugees
- Migration, Politics, and Social Work: The Challenge of Justice and Care
- Services to Migrants

“The opportunity to talk to people in the field we were studying gave us the opportunity to examine the discrepancies between what we read and what really happens on the ground. This allowed for a much fuller and more engaging picture of what is going on for migrants and refugees in our country and around the world.”

—Student / *Migration, Politics, and Social Work: The Challenge of Justice and Care*

## Interdisciplinary Certificate in Humanitarian Assistance

The Boston College School of Social Work recently launched an online Interdisciplinary Certificate in Humanitarian Assistance (ICHA) to ensure that its graduates and humanitarian partners have access to up-to-date knowledge on how best to respond to rapidly changing needs around the globe.

The ICHA curriculum, developed in partnership with international non-governmental organizations, consists of eight modules that give students a grounding in core, interdisciplinary competencies of global humanitarian assistance. Each module reflects a pressing social, political, and health challenge:

1. Migrants and Refugees in the Global Landscape
2. Basics of Refugee Determination
3. Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
4. Introduction to International Child Protection
5. Climate Change, Displacement, and Human Rights
6. Gender-Based Violence
7. Public Health in Emergencies
8. Education in Emergencies

**Learn more by visiting [bc.edu/icha](https://bc.edu/icha)**

**“ICHA’s purpose is to provide foundational knowledge, whether for someone who is working at a refugee camp or as an administrator at an NGO in London—or for a student who is interested in humanitarian work.”**

— Thomas Crea  
*Professor; Assistant Dean, Global Programs; and  
Chair of the Global Practice Field of Practice*





LEARN MORE → [BC.EDU/SSW](https://bc.edu/ssw)

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