

**Roula El-Rifai:** All right, it's 8:03, so we're going to begin. Hello, everyone, and welcome. My name is Roula El-Rifai. I'm Senior Program Specialist with the Democratic and Inclusive Governance team at the International Development Research Centre. Within that team, I manage the forced displacement portfolio. So, welcome to this information session on our final call for proposals to establish research chairs in universities in North and West Africa. I'll begin with a few administrative details and then introduce my colleagues at the IDRC. We are recording this event, this session, and we will be sharing the recording just after the information session. You'll notice that this session will take place mostly in French, but we are very happy to answer any questions in English. Please note that in order for us to be able to answer as many questions as possible, we will only be taking questions through the chat. Consequently, participants in this session have been muted. To access the chat, click on the chat icon at the bottom-right of your screen. If you have any technical difficulties, please do not use the chat and instead send an email to Jill. Jill is going to send out her email address in the chat on the right ([jchapman@idrc.ca](mailto:jchapman@idrc.ca)). Today's session is going to be an hour long, but we are very happy to be here and have scheduled an additional 15 minutes if need be. Lastly, please note that we are going to be taking note of all your questions. If we don't have time to answer all the questions asked today during the session, we will post our answers in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section of our website. And we will let you know once the page has been updated following this information session. Also, please note that we are also happy to answer your questions by email as well if you send them along to [gdi@idrc.ca](mailto:gdi@idrc.ca). Jill has also just typed that email address in the chat. Alright, I'm very happy to immediately pass the floor over to Caroline Ford. Caroline is the Director of Democratic and Inclusive Governance. Over to you, Caroline.

**Caroline Ford:** Hello, good evening. As Roula has just mentioned, my name is Caroline Ford. I'm the Director of the Democratic and Inclusive Governance team, and I'm personally very proud to be where we are at this stage, to be seeking out research chairs once again in two fields, in two regions: West Africa and the Middle East. I would like to underscore that the IDRC office in Ottawa, Canada is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin nation. I would also like to recognize that you are all joining us today from places both near and far and acknowledge the traditional keepers and guardians of those lands. Right, so, as I just said, I am very proud to be here with you. Our new strategy is part of an important area of investment. And this initiative is being led by our division that focuses on an approach based on rights as well as the localization of knowledge and innovation. The IDRC has now launched a call for proposals to create eight research chairs: four in the Middle East and East Africa and four in Central and South America and in South and East Asia. With the selection of four new chairs in the North and West Africa regions, we estimate that a network of 12 chairs can make a difference in promoting local knowledge, solutions and innovation. This focus, as you know, is in response to a major global challenge. Work supports and strengthens experience, and the IDRC's current work (namely forced displacement in addition to the discipline) includes health, the environment, education, governance and economic development. In the meantime, the IDRC is developing a cross-disciplinary approach that accounts for [?] taboos; during displacement, integrated solutions were needed. I wish you good luck and thank you once again for your interest. Over to you, Roula.

**Roula El-Rifai:** Thank you very much, Caroline. So, what we're going to do now is that I'm going to say a few things in anticipation of a few questions that are coming, based on our experience with the last two information sessions that we organized. And we're going to put a link in the chat to the information session that was recently organized that's going to be in English. As you can see, there are many people on the screen. I'm going to say a few things and then I'll introduce our two regional directors in Dakar in West Africa, in Amman covering North Africa, and later on, two colleagues from the York University LEARN (Local Engagement Refugee Research Network/Réseau de recherche des réfugiés pour la participation locale) network. So, I'll start by saying a few things in anticipation of a few questions, as I said. So, there is no preference in this call for proposals in terms of countries. Well, they have to be eligible for the call, but no preference will be given in terms of universities or preference for former IDRC partners. The selection process is going to be very rigorous and based on selection criteria stipulated in the call for proposals. It will be fair and impartial using a committee consisting of internal IDRC staff and external reviewers. This competition, this call for proposals is open only to universities. Only one application is being accepted from each university. In terms of the focus, it's my theme (my colleagues and regional directors are going to be talking a bit more about that), but just to put the emphasis on a few points: we do not want to predetermine the thematic focus. We are looking for the relevance of the themes for the region that the chair will be operating in. We are looking for analyses that show how this chair will fill significant knowledge gaps. We are looking for a multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral approach to research. We're also looking for proof of collaboration with communities as well as the impact on policies, a knowledge ecosystem approach. The focus and emphasis is really on gender analysis, not only analysis based on women and girls. The emphasis will be on integrating a feminist gender analysis with an intersectional analysis. And lastly, we're looking for work that complements the IDRC's business strategy. The approach for this call for proposals will be a step-by-step approach, and my colleague Jill is going to include a bit about the timeline in the chat. We'll start with the call that was already launched: the deadline is October 14. Once the winners have been selected, we will ask that the proposal that was submitted be further developed and finalized based on comments from members of the selection committee. This will be followed by a contract with the university, and we expect there to be a research chair selection process conducted by the university itself as well. Then, the university and the IDRC will announce the selected chair, and work will begin. Lastly, there's the emphasis on ongoing work, from the outset, collaborative work between the 12 research chairs to share knowledge and strategies. Some questions that were previously raised include the following: there were a lot of questions on the selection process for the chair position by the university itself. So, we encourage and expect details about an open and transparent chair selection process. We encourage an open internal and external process within universities. If the process is internal only, it must be adequately justified. We expect a fair and impartial process. The incumbent must not have already been selected at the time proposals are being received for this call. Consequently, the final selection for this position must be made after winners from institutions have been selected by the IDRC. Questions on the sustainability of this chair position: the sustainability of the position beyond IDRC funding (which lasts five years) will be of critical importance. The emphasis must really be on this IDRC initiative—it's part of our efforts to institutionalize research on forced displacement. We therefore consider that this consists of supporting institutions and not individual researchers. This is not truly a research project. The objective is to institutionalize knowledge on forced displacement in developing countries in the Global South. The goal of this funding is to establish a research chair position within the university that will last beyond IDRC

funding. Considerable focus on mentoring young academics will be very important. It's essential to show how this will be achieved both within and beyond universities. We are looking for proof of community connection and networking and for the integration of these community networks into academic work. Considerable focus on policies at all levels will link local and global levels. And lastly, we really encourage you to take the time to reflect on what transformative work on gender would mean in the context of forced displacement. In addition to providing aggregate data on sex, etc., an analysis on the implications of gender relations needs to be integrated as well as an intersectional analysis that takes account of minorities and more vulnerable communities. So, I'll stop there. There are a lot of questions, and for the time being, I'll start by introducing our regional directors. I'll start with Julie Crowley, our Regional Director in Dakar, representing West Africa. Over to you, Julie.

**Julie Crowley:** Thanks very much, Roula, and hello and good evening to everyone. It's a real pleasure to be here with you today. Just like Caroline, I'm delighted to see that we've reached the point at the IDRC of launching a call for proposals to create research chairs in relation to forced displacement, especially for West Africa. You undoubtedly know that it's a significant issue for the region, an issue that unfortunately continues to be of concern, so we think that there is a considerable need to develop and enhance related knowledge. As Roula mentioned, we do not intend to define the themes that could be submitted in the proposals in advance. That said, rest assured that there are still some general observations based on the dynamics of forced displacement in the regions [or Sahel, 17 :38], for example. Of course, there's a frequent interface between conflict, displacement and climate change. Also, fundamental issues related to governance and diversity in the region. Among other things, we know that this can all be seen, for example, in northern Nigeria, west of Cameroon, and it continues to have very concerning effects on local communities. Historically speaking, there have been conflicts in Sierra Leon, Liberia. There are lessons that can be learned about the way actions were carried out in response to these issues, so lessons that could potentially be applied to current situations. In addition, in terms of processes and solutions, you undoubtedly know that in terms of Nigerian, Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees, lessons have also been brought to light in terms of relationships between displacements and peacebuilding. Of course, there are situations where peace has not yet been achieved in the region—I'm thinking of Mali, in particular. Burkina Faso also comes to mind, where there are conflicts that are internal all the same, but they are still regional considerations, so there may still be parallels to be drawn between what's done, in this case, in past cases and what's being done currently. And lastly, of course the region is heavily influenced by regional institutions, notably ECOWAS, which plays an important role in terms of the decisions that are made and in relation to governance, so it's important to bear in mind what role this and other institutions can play. So, that's a very general overview of the dynamics related to forced displacement in our region, but I'm sure that you'll be inspired by this and much more when developing your proposals for us. So, I'll stop there, Roula. Once again, it's pleasure being here with you today.

**Roula El-Rifai:** Thank you very much, Julie. I'll give the floor over to Barbara Shenstone, our Regional Director in our Amman office, representing the Middle East and North Africa. And just to note that there was already an opportunity to apply for two chair positions in the Middle East, and so now it's going to be two chairs in North Africa. Over to you, Barbara.

**Barbara Shenstone:** Thanks very much, Roula. It's also a great pleasure and an honour to be with you here this afternoon. Like Roula just said, I represent the regional office for North Africa and the Middle East. The project before us for establishing chairs represents an important initiative for the IDRC and is part of a group of projects aimed at supporting and making more space for discussion, research and knowledge creation related to forced displacement issues. As you know, all too often the knowledge generated in regions housing displaced persons and refugees is influenced by the political needs of the West, including European countries, Canada and the United States. What's interesting here is the possibility of seeing what is possible when the choice of themes, the research work and the conclusions are managed and created in the region where they would be relevant and by researchers, academics and universities from that region. Issues for North African countries are specific but also related to regional and global issues in that field. As Julie mentioned, there is somewhat of an intersection between issues concerning climate change, abnormal droughts, forest fires, floods and extreme weather events that are specifically the result of climate change. This specifically causes population displacement, and this problem is not expected to decrease in the coming years. This is a country where there is an increase in youth who are already frustrated with the possibility of finding work and livelihoods that require democratic reforms. And [? 23:04], countries would already be limited by budgets to be able to offer social services to their own population, if not those in the worst positions or refugees in particular. While one region or country might be the destination of one displaced person, it can simultaneously be a changeover before reaching another destination. So, the issues are specific to that region, but these are also issues that affect the entire system and the entire environment of the large population displacements being experienced in the modern world that were created from inequality, the effects of climate change and conflicts. What I would like to see in this project is the possibility of seeing what could come from the independence of mind and research that these chairs could nourish and encourage among students and other researchers. I hope that these research projects will be based on rigorous methods, but these research projects could ultimately enlighten and illuminate the local, regional and global political base with wisdom that would be practical and independent of ideological policies and not manipulated by countries who may have other interests than that region's proper governance or well-being. So, I'm very enthusiastically following this project, and I encourage everyone to get involved. Thank you.

**Roula El-Rifai:** Thanks very much, Barbara. Now I'm going to pass the floor over to Heather Alexander, but I'd also like to introduce James Milner, who's the director of refugee research for local involvement, and Heather, who is also an expert in the issue of forced displacement. James and Heather will be playing the role of coordinator, facilitating collaboration as well as the sharing of knowledge and strategies that work among the 12 research chairs. So, I'll turn things over to Heather and James to speak a bit about the role they'll be playing, which is going to begin as soon as all the chairs are in place. Heather or James, over to you.

**Heather Alexander:** Thanks very much. Hello, everyone. I'd just like to say a few words about the network that's going to be created with the IDRC's support. Before speaking about the network, I'd just like to explain that LERRN is a collaboration between researchers based mainly in North America, at Carleton University, but we also have colleagues in East Africa and the Middle East as well as in several other regions of the world. LERRN is dedicated to [reconceptualizing] the research field in forced

displacement to give the power to those affected by forced displacement. With LERRN's collaboration, the IDRC is establishing a network between the 12 chairs to strengthen research, organize conferences to help disseminate research and help with collaborative research projects. So, the network will be created to help chairs do the work and to disseminate research throughout the world. The network will engage in a co-creation process, meaning that we'll help you create projects together, with other chairs, and to proliferate individual research projects throughout the world. And this network is going to be based at Carleton University and will begin operating in August. So, those are my few words. I'll be very happy to answer any questions about the network that you might have. Thank you, Roula.

**Roula El-Rifai:** Okay, thank you, everyone. So, while we wait for some questions in the chat, we have two comments asking whether the translation of this session will be available in English. So, I'd just like to confirm that yes, we will be translating the session and it will be shared in English, but in the meantime, I will go about, for our colleagues who are only English speakers, I am just going to quickly, in a couple of words, summarize some of the key things that were discussed in our session today. *And then, please feel free to ask questions in English as well. So just quickly, the things we went over are things that have come up in previous information sessions for previous calls in the other regions. The themes for the application, we do not predetermine, we are not deciding what the themes are going to be. We look for themes to be relevant to the region, we look for themes where there's a justification that there's a gap and knowledge. We are looking for strong partnership with the community, civil society organizations as well as great attention to the policy space and how the chair can influence policy at multiple levels. We do have countries of focus in the application, in the call itself, but we want to note that we're encouraging a regional participation by multiple countries, but we can only operate in certain countries administratively. But we do encourage a regional approach to the understanding of forced displacement issues. And our regional directors, Julie Crawley from Dakar and Barbara Shenstone from the Middle East also put emphasis on some of the issues and the challenges the region is facing. We put a lot of focus on the selection process of the chair, we are not favouring any university, we are not favouring former partners of IDRC, but we are really looking for a selection process for the chair that is open, that is transparent, that is very rigorous. The process can be internal to the university, but we encourage an external process. If the process is chosen to be internal, there has to be a solid justification for the process. We are only accepting one application per university, although we do encourage partnership between the universities, but we are going to be contracting one university in the process. And as for the candidates themselves, they have to be knowledgeable and experts in forced displacement, they have to know their regions really well and know the languages and the regions really well. So, I kind of just quickly go over the issues that we discussed, and I will mention something our director of the Democratic and Inclusive Governance Division, which houses this initiative on forced displacement in IDRC and the support to 12 research chairs and 6 regions. I will mention that this is part of 12 research chairs. In the process, we are working with [32:01 universities], local engagement refugees research networks, represented here by James Milner and Heather Alexander. This network at Carleton, which is in itself, a network of Southern researchers working with some Northern researchers. This network will be, from the beginning, working with the 12 research chairs to exchange information, best practices, ensure, sharing of strategies that work, methodologies that work in the research, methodologies from mentoring of young scholars, etc. So, I think I will stop there. I think I kind of quickly summarized in a few words what we kind of said in French, but we elaborated, but we will make sure the*

*translation will be available. We'll make sure that there's a translation of presentations done in French. In the meantime, we're waiting for questions, but I'll pass things over to James Milner.*

**James Milner:** Yes, thank you very much. I have a point I'd like to underscore that's very important that we saw in other competitions. It's just to specify that this program is not only a program for a researcher who receives the chair positions individually, but it's also a program that surrounds this individual with other researchers as well as a project with ties to community partners. So, when you're considering how you're going to build these two worlds, it's a question of identifying, of having a process of identifying an individual who will be taking on the chair position itself, and this individual will be responsible for the leadership of this project, but at the same time for ensuring that there is a program for other researchers, students and people from the community to work together. So, I'll just repeat myself in English: *a point is very important that we found in other competitions is to clarify that the proposal for a research chair is both a process to be able to identify individuals that will provide leadership in the delivery of the program of the chair, but also a program that implicates students early career researchers and members of the community. So, when thinking about what does it mean to have a research chair? It's both an individual and a program, and I think that's an important technical clarification that might help with some of the conceptualization of the project. So, thank you Roula. Thank you very much.*

**Roula El-Rifai:** Thank you, James. *I will add one more thing in English and I will [taught] what James said, we don't consider the chair as a research project per say. It's part of an initiative, it's meant to institutionalize knowledge and research from a local, global south perspective. We put a lot of emphasis on the durability, on the sustainability of the research chair beyond the funding of IDRC. We are hoping that the structure that is created will continue beyond our support and funding and continue to be a great collector as a university between community and policy. And this is how we are envisaging the role of the university. We have one question in English: should the proposal for each university be submitted by the administration of the proposed chair? I'm gonna say again, on the process of selection of the chair, the chair cannot be selected before the application is submitted. We expect a very rigorous selection process for the chair by the university. You cannot predetermine who the chair is going to be, we are looking for an open, transparent process of selecting the chair, internal and external. I hope that answers your questions. It was a question on: does the application have to be submitted by the university or the incumbent of the chair position in universities, within universities? And the answer is that it's absolutely not submitted by the incumbent of the chair position. This position must be awarded following a very rigorous internal and external selection process by the university. Right, so, I think we're waiting on other questions. OK, James, I'm glad you got the question. Maybe one more thing in English that I didn't say: strong emphasis on a gender analysis, a feminist approach, a transformative gender approach to understanding the challenges of forced displacement, but also a strong intersectional approach that puts the focus on different communities, class issues, vulnerabilities of different communities [?] the refugee and other. We expect that to be very very detailed in the actual proposal. I see that my colleague... So, I've introduced everyone, but I need to introduce... I see that my colleague Ramata Thioune is also a Senior Program Specialist at the IDRC, and she's the one who will be managing the two projects, the two research chairs on the IDRC's behalf. Welcome, Ramata, my colleague, and I am going to be the other person who will be managing the chairs, the North Africa chairs project. Welcome, Ramata. I'll pass things over to you if you'd like to say a few words. And I'd just like to note*



that Ramata is somewhat of our expert on the gender issue. She's done a lot of work on gender and the IDRC's policy on gender and intersectionality. I'm not actually sure if there's a word for that in French, for intersectionality. But I'll give the floor over to you, Ramata.

**Ramata Thioune:** Thank you, thanks very much, Roula. And thanks very much to my colleagues and friends who are here with us today. I'm sorry that I got here late because I had a problem with my calendar, but I was able to listen to Roula's latest comments with great interest, and especially what we heard from our regional directors. It's a great pleasure to truly have these participants, and for us it's an extremely important activity that's going to contribute to democratizing access to knowledge in a much more general way, in addition to contributing to generating more endogenous knowledge. I think that it's extremely important in a setting where knowledge generation presents many challenges, so it's a volatile context with a focus on displaced persons. So, thank you, Roula. As Roula mentioned, for me, it's a pleasure to be involved. And in the chat, so I don't take up too much time speaking, in the chat box, I'll try to contribute as much as possible on these gender perspectives and *intersectionnalité* [intersectionality] (that's the right word, Roula) because gender is extremely important, starting from gender equality. But intersectionality provides many nuances in the sense of inclusion. I wouldn't say it's perfect because perfect doesn't exist in this world, but in any case, better inclusion for all [sections] that are marginalized in some way in these research processes, but also in these processes of adopting research findings. So, thanks very much once again for your interest and participation.

**Roula El-Rifai:** Thanks very much, Ramata. So, we already have two questions. One question from [Name]. Thanks for your question. Can researchers associated with research centres join the research chair's team? So, the answer is yes, absolutely. We work directly with a university, but we expect there to be a network of researchers within the university, outside the university, in the community with NGOs. But working with other researchers is absolutely necessary because we need a network with more knowledge and more fields and expertise. I hope that answers your question. Integrating other researchers from other universities is of course welcome. James, Heather, did you want to add anything on that? The chair experience is an experience that includes many researchers. Would you like to say a few words on that?

**James Milner:** Yes, definitely. And that's also the issue that I raised earlier. It's really ensuring that the individual, as a chair, is part of a program, and it's also related to this question: whether universities can associate with other research centres and institutions centred around human rights, including the rights of immigrants, in the form of a consortium? The answer is simple: absolutely, yes. What we've really found is that this type of research is ideally situated in ecosystems, that is to say programs where researchers are involved in issues that are explored in partnership, with members of the community. So, really considering what kind of [inaudible] could consider to apply for this chair position together, to have a regional approach on issues that affect several locations, but ensuring that it's not only an academic program [inaudible 42:32], that it's well aligned with practical issues, with policy issues. How can the research be conceived by members of the community while also being part of a process of change? And a process of change for a change of program, how programs can better respond to needs at hand. At the same time, how can research be part of the process of reconsidering policies on a local, national and regional level? So yes, this question about a consortium, it's really in that context where the priority for this application, it's to have the ability that researchers and others who are more directly

affected by the forced displacement phenomenon. They are the ones who can establish a research agenda, and that research agenda is part of a process of changing practices and policies. Thank you.

**Roula El-Rifai:** Thanks very much, James. We have a question from [Name]; I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly. So, my colleague Ramata already answered, but I'm still going to read the question in everyone's interest: Can you revisit the information about the participation/selection of people who will be able to work on research projects if the university's application is accepted? And like my colleague Ramata said, of course, we expect the university to select participants using a very transparent and open process. Right, in terms of the skills of those university candidates, these are people who have knowledge and are also experts on the issue of forced displacement, who are very familiar with the region and the issues of forced displacement. My colleagues Barbara and Julie already talked a bit about issues in the two regions. And then, of course, thorough knowledge of the language spoken in that region. So, we have other questions: Hello, can the university associate with a research centre or institution centred around human rights, including the rights of immigrants, in the form of a consortium? So, I'm repeating myself a bit here, but yes, absolutely. Like James said, we encourage partnerships, networking and consortiums with other centres. Well, the contract will be between the IDRC and the university itself, but we encourage this type of networking with several stakeholders in the field of research on forced displacement. That might include NGOs, it could include other universities, it could include individual researchers, and so on. I hope that answers your question. Thank you, Ramata, as well for answering in the same spirit. So, in the meantime, I don't see any other questions. Natasha Jay, am I missing some questions? *Maybe, I will repeat a couple of those questions in English. We have been asked the question: Can universities partner to develop a consortium with some NGOs, human right NGOs or other organizations working on human rights and refugees and forced displacement issues. And the answer to that is a big yes, absolutely yes. We welcome networking and partnership with other organizations, with community organizations, with refugee-led organizations, with human rights organizations, because we are looking at forced displacement from the ecosystem approach of knowledge generation. IDRC's contract will be with one university, but in the process, any complementarity and connections and networking with others will be greatly enhanced, because basically our premise, it takes a village, it takes a lot of actors, it takes a whole ecosystem to actually make changes, not only in a country, but in a region, and globally. Enhance in a way the ambition of IDRC to fund 12 research chairs and 6 regions to exchange that information and try to make a difference. Informing global discourse, but also what works and what doesn't work in context where policy spaces are often quite limited.* I hope that answers your questions. *I think we are waiting for additional questions.* I'll just take this opportunity to thank my colleagues who helped me manage the technical aspects of this session, the big job that all that entails. My colleagues Natasha Chhabra, Jill Chapman and [Ana Olivera]. Thank you to the three of you for all your help. While we wait for other questions, we still have 10 minutes, but I don't see any other questions. So maybe we can end the session. I'll just ask Caroline to say a few words to conclude the session, but I'll just reiterate that all questions that were asked will be included in our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on our website. And we'll let you know once our website has been updated. Thank you all, colleagues and participants alike, for your participation. Please don't hesitate to send us other questions by email at a later time. That's all for answering your questions. Thanks again, everyone. So, Caroline, I'll leave it to you to conclude our session today.





**Caroline Ford:** Thank you, Roula. Just one final thank you to all my colleagues here today for your time and your interest, and to my colleagues who registered for this meeting to ask questions. I see there were quite a few questions in English, so I encourage you to send us questions in English or French to our email address, and we'll answer them as soon as possible. So, thank you very much for your time. And thank you for your interest and thank you very much for joining us in the fight for human rights for displaced persons. Thank you. ... You are on mute Roula.

**Roula El-Rifai:** So, I see that [Name] is writing a question, so we'll wait for them.

**Caroline Ford:** Yes.

**Roula El-Rifai:** Thank you for the session and for all the information. Thank you, and thanks for participating. Goodbye, everyone! Thanks very much, everyone. Goodbye.