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Series Editor's Preface

James C. Hathaway

University of Michigan Law School, jch@umich.edu

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

Could we – should we – think differently about the ways in which refugees are assisted and protected? Is it possible to turn traditional thinking on its head by seeing refugees not as the objects of protection and assistance, but instead as the architects and managers of solutions?

In this important book, Alexander Betts, Evan Easton-Calabria and Kate Pincock suggest that the answer to both questions is an emphatic 'yes'. Drawing on their academic backgrounds in political science, history and anthropology, the authors of *The Global Governed? Refugees as Providers of Protection and Assistance* push us to broaden our thinking about how the refugee regime should be understood and operated. Specifically, they draw on a series of original East African case studies to challenge the traditional privileging of states and international organisations as the "providers" of protection and assistance, showing how refugees can and do organise collectively to provide social protection to each other.

Having demonstrated the ability of refugees to provide rather than simply to receive, the authors pointedly challenge the view that 'protection is a form of assistance that is presumed to be inherently benign ... [T]his representation frequently masks that it is malleable, highly contested, and frequently used to legitimate the authority to govern.' Put simply, the way in which protection and assistance are presently structured can amount to an exercise of power over refugees. If this is so, ought we not to adopt a more critical stance about the roles of the official actors and their non-governmental partners who direct the current system of refugee protection and assistance that is – at least in theory – rooted in a commitment to refugee empowerment? And given the demonstrated ability of refugees themselves to author and manage answers to their own predicaments, is the time not right to think hard about a new theory of global governance in the refugee context – one in which refugees are recognised as governors, rather than just governed?

This book beautifully combines rigorous empirical research design with deep theoretical engagement. Its thesis is timely, challenging us all honestly to acknowledge the ways in which refugees have traditionally been denied agency over their own lives, and offering a theory of how that can and should change.

James C. Hathaway
Editor, Cambridge Asylum and Migration Studies