



Background paper prepared for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report

*Migration, displacement and education:
Building bridges, not walls*

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES

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ACRONYMS

AY	Academic year
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
Cara	Council for At-Risk Academics
CLCC	Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
ERN	European Resettlement Network
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IIE	Institute of International Education
ISCED	The International Standard Classification of Education
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union
NOKUT	Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
SAR	Scholars at Risk
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SRP	Student Refugee Program
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Education Fund
WUSC	World University Service of Canada

TERMINOLOGY

Asylum Seeker

An asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed (UNHCR, 2016a).

Higher Education

In general, higher education is considered as formal education that follows secondary education. As such, higher education is also referred to as post-secondary or tertiary education.

For the purposes of this paper, I use the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) description (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2012). The ISCED distinguishes between:

- Short-cycle tertiary education programmes at ISCED level 5 (at least two years);
- Bachelor's or equivalent first degree programmes at ISCED level 6 (three to four years);
- Bachelor's or equivalent long first degree programmes at ISCED level 6 (more than four years);
- Master's or equivalent long first degree programmes at ISCED level 7 (at least five years);
- Doctoral level - the successful completion of ISCED level 7 is usually required for entry into ISCED level 8.

Tertiary education and higher education are used interchangeably.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Refers to universities, other educational establishments, centres and structures of higher education, and centres of research and culture associated with any of the above, public or private, that are approved as such, either through recognised accreditation systems or by the competent state authorities (UNESCO, 1997).

Refugee

The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Section 1(A) defines a refugee as: "A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 1951). In line with UNHCR (2018a, p. 61) definitions, "The refugee population also includes people in refugee-like situations that includes groups of people who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to those of refugees but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained."

ABSTRACT

Higher education holds many benefits for refugees. Yet, historically, their higher education opportunities have been very limited. This paper addresses refugees' access to, and participation in, higher education by examining factors that serve as barriers. It then specifies initiatives aimed at increasing access. A case study based on original research delves deeply into how peer-to-peer sponsorship holds great promise for increasing higher education access and durable solutions for refugee youth. The paper closes with recommendations for policy and research.

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, less than 1% of refugee youth had access to higher education. A myriad of challenges account for this low rate, including learning gaps due to interrupted schooling, issues with academic credentials, financial constraints and limited fluency in the language of instruction.

This paper addresses refugees' access to higher education in three parts; the first part grounds the issue by demonstrating the impetus for higher education for refugees, outlining the international conventions that call for refugees' participation in higher education and providing enrolment data. The second part outlines the various barriers to access. In the third part, the paper identifies initiatives designed to increase higher education access for refugees. In this section, a detailed case study on the World University Service of Canada's (WUSC) Student Refugee Program (SRP) describes a unique initiative that offers refugee youth access higher education and to the durable solution of resettlement. The paper closes with recommendations for policy and research.

PART 1: IMPETUS, INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND ENROLMENT DATA

1a. Why does higher education for refugees matter?

The benefits of higher education are best organised under those garnered at the individual and societal levels. At the individual level, economists note advantages to education are particularly robust with the completion of a bachelor's degree. Higher education has been shown to be a gateway to upward social and economic mobility by enabling access to higher-skilled, better-paid positions, access to well-connected social networks, and entry into the middle class (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). The OECD (2011) found that in 'Brazil, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic and the United States, men holding a degree from a university or an advanced research programme earn at least 80% more than men who have an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education. In Brazil, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, the Slovak Republic, the United Kingdom and the United States, women have a similar advantage' (p.139).

Besides individual economic gains, persons with a bachelor's degree are more tolerant of others, tend to have lower child mortality rates, and live longer and healthier lives. The public benefits of an

educated population include a lowered burden on criminal and social services, increased political engagement and increased taxes from a higher-earning labour force (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013).

The private and public benefits of higher education appear to hold irrespective of immigration status. The pertinent question is; does higher education matter *in particular* for refugees, and if so, why?

SUPPORTS DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES

Access to primary and secondary education is widely accepted to be critical to the wellbeing and livelihood of all children. However, higher education for refugees has only come into focus in recent years. This is due, in part, to UNHCR's *2012-2016 Education Strategy* that for the first time, included higher education for refugees as a key priority area. Prior to this, it was rarely considered as part of a humanitarian response strategy.

Higher education holds value for all three of UNHCR's solutions¹ for refugees:

- 1) Repatriation into their country of origin²;
- 2) Integration into current country of asylum;
- 3) Resettlement into a third country.

Higher education plays an important role in advancing refugees' integration into host societies, in developing skill sets that can be leveraged for entry into labour markets and toward post-conflict reconstruction in countries of origin. For example, a study of 5,000 university graduates who held DAFI scholarships (UNHCR's higher education scholarship programme)³ and had completed their studies in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, found that 78% of those integrated into their host countries and 93% of those who had repatriated were employed (Morlang & Watson, 2007). Graduates contributed to the human resource needs of the developing countries where they were

¹ For more detail, visit <http://www.unhcr.org/solutions.html>

² UNHCR prioritises the promotion of enabling conditions for voluntary repatriation. These should ensure that individuals can exercise a free and informed choice, and to mobilise support for returnees. UNHCR promotes and facilitates voluntary repatriation through various means. Safe and dignified voluntary repatriation requires the full commitment of the country of origin to help reintegrate its own people.

³ For a detailed description of the DAFI, see page 28.

hosted or repatriated and also supported these countries' reconstruction and sustainable development. Since many held leadership positions, they also served as important role models,⁴ thus amplifying the original scholarship investment (Morlang & Watson, 2007).

SERVES A PROTECTIVE FUNCTION

Education, at all levels, performs a protective function (UNHCR & UNESCO, 2016). Higher education protects refugees from marginalisation and abuse (Kirk & Sherab, 2016). According to Barakat & Milton (2015), higher education can also help young men and women to remain hopeful and resistant, protecting them from the pull and rhetoric of extremist groups.

OFFERS A POSITIVE IDENTITY

The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Section 1(A) defines a refugee as: 'A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it' (UNGA, 1951).

Thus, loss and fear are not only central to the definition of refugees, their experiences, but are also part of the dominant narrative and collective imagination of 'refugee-ness' (Zeus, 2011).⁵ When they enter higher education institutions, refugees adopt the (additional) identity of *student* and *scholar* and benefit from the positive connotations of this identification. Higher education students are often heralded the future innovators, thinkers and leaders of knowledge-based societies. In essence, the identity of *student* is not heavy with loss but rather hopeful with possibility.⁶

⁴ This was especially true for female refugees, who served as mentors for females in their community.

⁵ Refugees also cross other barriers such as linguistic and cultural borders. They also move across internal borders of identity. The dominant narrative (often deficit-based) of refugees plays out in mainstream media and through political rhetoric.

⁶ In an article by Young-Powell (2015) a Syrian asylum seeker in a German university stated, 'University is the one place where you're not labelled.'

PROVIDES ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Poverty is a significant issue for refugees. For instance, a 2016 World Bank and UNHCR study found that the majority of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon and Jordan were vulnerable and living in poverty. The report states that in 2014,

Seven in 10 registered Syrian refugees living in Jordan and Lebanon could be considered poor. This number increases to 9 in 10 refugees if the poverty lines used by the respective host countries are considered. The poverty of Syrian refugees is higher in Jordan than in Lebanon. In Jordan, there is also evidence that poverty among refugees has increased by several percentage points between 2013 and 2015. (Verme et al. 2016, p. xvi)

As indicated earlier, higher education and particularly bachelor's degrees, hold important private and public benefits. By providing the opportunity to access to skilled, well-paid positions in the labour market, higher education can provide refugees with much needed economic benefits. It is also a way for refugees to foster supportive social networks of peers and community members, which is necessary for successful integration.⁷

CONTRIBUTES TO THE PUBLIC GOOD ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education has a 'common public good' role that extends beyond teaching and research. During UNESCO's (1991) second consultation of NGOs on *The Role of Higher Education in Society*, the various stakeholders recommended that in addition to excellence in teaching, training and research, the social function of higher education should be guided by 'the relevance of services offered by higher education institutions to the perceived priority needs of their respective societies' (UNESCO, 1991).⁸

Providing access to refugees and asylum seekers is part of the public function of higher education. At the local level, educated refugees are better able to adapt and integrate into host communities and economies (in countries where they have the legal right to work). In addition, if those who have fled are ever able to return to their country of origin with skills and the understanding of the consequences of conflict, this has great value to rebuilding societies that prioritise peace. For instance, Coffie (2014) found that of Liberian refugee returnees from Ghana and Guinea, those who

⁷ Details on higher education's role in developing social capital can be found in the case study (p. 42)

⁸ UNESCO is the only United Nations agency with a mandate in higher education.

were able to access higher education opportunities during their period of exile, deployed their professions and skills towards peace building upon returning to Liberia.

In sum, there is a clear impetus for providing higher education access for refugees. Next, the conventions that underpin the provision of higher education for refugees are outlined.

1b. International declarations and conventions

Access to and provision of higher education for refugees finds support in several international declarations, resolutions and conventions including:

- Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit (UNGA, 1948);
- Article 22 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees: Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education; and The Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships (UNGA, 1951);
- Article 13.2c of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education (UNGA, 1966);
- Article 28 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child: Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means (UNGA, 1989);
- Article 5e.V of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights [...] the right to education and training (UNGA, 1965);
- Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination

against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women: (a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training (UNGA, 1979);

- Article 14.2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right...(d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency (UNGA, 18 December 1979);

1c. Refugees' higher education enrolment data

According to the UNHCR (2016b), only 1% of refugees have access to higher education. This statistic was first noted in the 2016 report *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis*. What is the evidence for this often-cited rate? UNHCR utilised two types of data: 1) internal data collected through country operations, at individual refugee and household levels; and 2) external data from UIS statistics, host governments and information gathered from NGOs and civil societies. UNHCR extrapolated the numbers to factor in situations where data collection was difficult and/or incomplete due to a number of challenges.⁹

While on average only 1% of all refugees taken together worldwide have access to higher education, there is variation at the country level. For example, in 2014, while only less than 2% of Syrian refugees were enrolled in Turkey, they were as high as 6% in Lebanon, and 8% in Jordan and Egypt (Cremonini, Loriska & Safar, 2015).

⁹ UNHCR has indicated that given increased attention on higher education and expanded support programmes available to the forcibly displaced worldwide in recent years, it is currently engaging in a data review process and working with research institutions to determine access and enrolment trends.

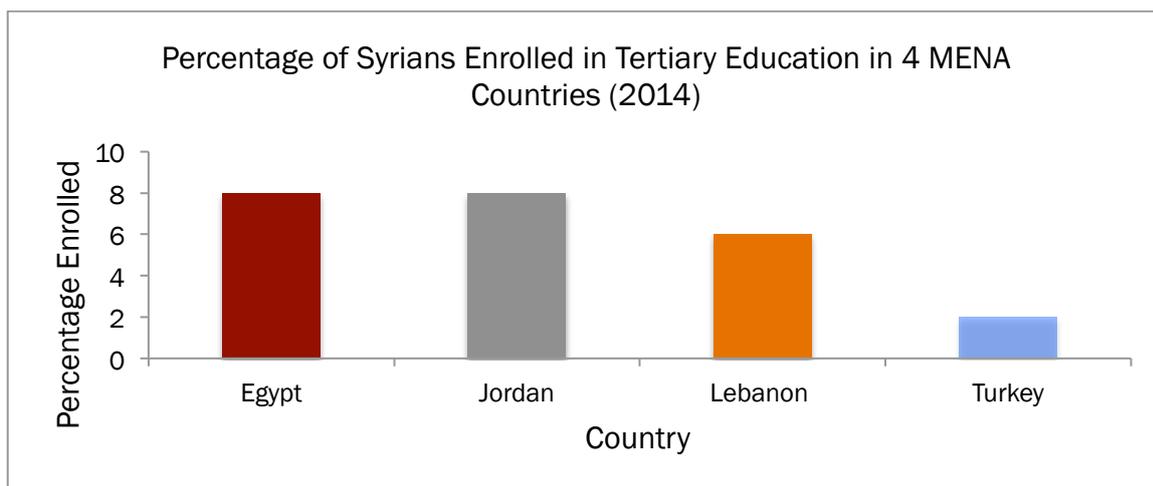


Figure 1. Percentage of Syrians enrolled in tertiary education in four MENA countries, 2014 (Cremonini, Lorisika & Safar, 2015)

To further illustrate the variation in refugees’ higher education enrolment at country level, this subsection examines enrolment data for one selected country in each of the regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), North America and South America. The countries (Ethiopia, Australia, Turkey, Canada and Brazil) were selected for: 1) hosting large numbers of refugees and 2) having reliable enrolment data available.¹⁰

REGION: AFRICA

Country example: Ethiopia

Ethiopia is the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, second only to Kenya. At the end of September 2017, Ethiopia hosted 883,546 refugees with 99% originating from just four countries: Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan (UNHCR, 2018b).

In 2016, approximately 1,600 refugees were studying in different higher education institutions (HEIs) across the country. Approximately 1,300 (81%) of these refugees were sponsored by the Ethiopian government and enrolled in state-owned universities. The German government-funded DAFI Scholarship Programme supported the remaining 300 students. In addition, 2,638 adult refugees

¹⁰ The only exception is Brazil, where enrolment data was not available.

were enrolled in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) with another 9,672 adult refugees enrolled in Adult Functional Literacy and Numeracy programmes (UNHCR, 2016b).

REGION: MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Country example: Turkey

There are over 2.9 million Syrian refugees registered in Turkey, by far the largest host of Syrian refugees globally (UNHCR, 2017). In 2011, early in the Syrian crisis, it is estimated that there were about 4,000 Syrian students enrolled in Turkish universities. However, in the 2015-2016 Academic Year (AY) enrolment more than doubled to reach 10,000 students and increased again to 14,000 students in the 2016 -17 AY (Yavcan & El-Ghali, 2017). The 2016 enrolment of Syrian refugees in Turkish higher education by degree level shows that the majority were enrolled in bachelor’s degree programmes and several hundred were completing their doctoral degrees (Table 1).

Table 1.

Syrian Students in Turkish Higher Education by Degree Level 2016-2017

Degree level	Number of Students Enroled
Associate Degrees	1,102
Bachelor Degrees	12,127
Masters Degrees	1,067
Doctoral Degrees	335
Total	14,631

Note. Reprinted from “Higher Education and Syrian Refugee Students: The Case of Turkey” by Yavcan, B. & El-Ghali, H.A. (2017), p. 18.

REGION: ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGION

Country example: Australia

Using data from the Department of Education and Training’s Higher Education Statistics Collection, a group of researchers at the University of Melbourne examined the 2009-2014 higher education enrolment of students from refugee backgrounds (Terry, Naylor, Nguyen & Rizzo, 2016). They found that there were 3,506 students with a refugee background enrolled in Australian HEIs as of 2014. Students with refugee backgrounds in Australian HEIs doubled from 2009-2014, with approximately

73% undertaking full time studies. **The data also indicated that while a higher proportion of refugee students were men, there was gender variation by country of origin.** For instance, more female Iraqis of refugee backgrounds were enrolled than male Iraqis (176 versus 167) while there were nearly equal numbers of female and male students from Iran enrolled (251 females and 252 males). By contrast, 372% more Sudanese males (216) than females (66) were enrolled.

REGION: EUROPE

Country example: Germany

Refugees in Germany are increasingly enrolling in university courses. A survey conducted by the German Rectors Conference (HRK), representing the heads of German universities among its member institutions, showed that a total of 1,140 refugees were enrolled for studies in 2017, which is five times as many were in enrolled in 2016. In AY 2016, approximately 12,000 refugees consulted course and career guidance services. In 2017, this number doubled to 24,000. Syrians made up two-thirds of prospective students, while the rest arrived from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq (German Rectors' Conference, 2017).

The same survey found that approximately 5,700 refugees were enrolled in language and prep courses in the winter term of the 2016-17 AY, an increase of 80% from the 2016 summer term. The German Rectors Conference views this trend as a sign of the importance of scaffolding / support programmes during degree courses, as well as pre-study preparation and counselling.

Interestingly, Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees reported that **around 13% of all refugees enrolled in degree programmes in 2016 already held a higher education degree.**¹¹

NORTH AMERICA

Country example: Canada

In Canada, the 2016 Canadian Census data shows that nearly one-third of refugees (31.5%) who received their permanent resident status upgraded their educational credentials. For those who arrived as adults (18 and older) this rate was about 22%, which is higher than the economic or family category of immigrants. However, while adult economic immigrants who upgraded their education

¹¹ Entry into degree programmes are perhaps informed by the belief that a degree from the host country would be more valuable to entering labour market entry.

in Canada tended to complete a bachelor's degree or higher, the vast majority of (71.1%) adult refugees in Canada completed a trades or college diploma. This suggests that financial constraints and financial obligations may play a factor in decisions around the selection of higher education programmes (Statistics Canada, 2017).¹²

SOUTH AMERICA

Country example: Brazil

South American countries have been increasingly opening their doors to resettle refugees outside of their region. One of the most visible initiatives was the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Chile and Brazil during 2007 and 2008 (Ruiz, 2015).

Brazil is the largest country in South America and receives more refugees than any other country in the region; as of 2016, Brazil hosted about 2,100 refugees. By national law, refugees have access to healthcare, education and the right to work. Although national data on higher education enrolment of refugees is not yet available, in 2017, we know that there are institutional initiatives to increase access and enrolment. For instance, the Federal University of Santa Maria launched an initiative focused on vulnerable refugees and immigrants who has recently arrived in Brazil by making it easier access to vocational, technological and higher education degrees for this group.

This section of the paper has argued that refugees' inclusion in higher education holds benefits at the individual level, and for host and home societies. It has also outlined that refugees' rights to higher education are enshrined in numerous international declarations, resolutions and conventions. A review of enrolment data and trends in selected countries in five regions has revealed wide variation. Nonetheless, globally, refugees' access to higher education is low. To understand their low rates of participation, the next section considers the barriers that refugees face in accessing higher education.

¹² For the first time in Canada's history, the 2016 Census included information on the admission category of immigrants to Canada. The three immigration streams are 1. Economic: educated and skilled immigrants 2. Family: to reunify families 3. Humanitarian: to provide humanitarian and compassionate refuge.

PART II: BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES

A brief overview of higher education admissions is essential to understand the access barriers refugees face. Until the 20th century, formal education, and particularly higher education, was largely inaccessible except to wealthy males.¹³ The shift from elite to mass higher education increased access to a wider segment of society. At the same time, with industrialisation and the knowledge-based economy, the purpose of higher education also shifted from a purely intellectual and theoretical pursuit to one that had value (human capital) that could be exchanged in the labour market (Tilak, 2008). With the massification of higher education, institutions in some countries turned to testing in the final year of secondary school to determine aptitude for higher education. Over the years, institutions also began adding interviews, personal statements and additional criteria to determine 'good fit'.¹⁴

In order to access to higher education, refugees, like other applicants, are required to undergo an admissions process to demonstrate their eligibility and aptitude for study. Although eligibility requirements vary widely by country and institution, in general, HEIs have the following requirements for applicants:

- Proof of citizenship, residence or immigration status;
- Documentation of secondary school level education completion (such as a diploma);
- Transcripts of secondary school level courses and grades achieved;
- Passing scores on secondary leaving exams;
- University entry exams;
- Evidence of Language proficiency in the language(s) of instruction;
- Scores on aptitude tests (e.g. Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test);
- Financial Aid or payment forms (indicating ability to pay / financial aid needed).

¹³ The massive expansion of higher education in the 20th and 21st centuries was nearly a global phenomenon, with differences by region and country (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). For instance, in Europe it was a process that unfolded during much of the twentieth century, while in Africa the demand for higher education escalated dramatically in the post-colonial period of the 1960s and 1970s.

¹⁴ This also served to keep the status quo (and limit entry to certain groups). For more information read Karabel, 2005 or Golden, 2006.

2a. Missing qualifications and evaluation of credentials

The qualifications-related barriers to refugees' access to higher education are two-fold.

First, refugees may be without any documentary evidence of prior learning (credentials). With the turbulent circumstances surrounding forced displacement, this is not surprising. Documents may also be lost or stolen during the migration route, in reception centres and refugee camps.

Second, if refugees manage to flee with documentation, these credentials must be evaluated, recognised and/or equalised. Recognition of credentials is a complex issue - the process needs to be aligned with existing international and regional conventions, with recognition usually involving quality assurance of the original studies and determination of the validity of incomplete studies. Moreover, the evaluation and equalisation process requires human and financial resources that may not be in adequate supply in host countries (UNESCO, 2015).

Recognition and equalisation of credentials can prove to be especially difficult for refugees who arrive from conflict zones where institutions are looted, destroyed and/or being used for military purposes.¹⁵

In addition, when exile is a result of government-inflicted persecution, governments from refugees' countries of origins may be unwilling to offer support and substantiation of enrolment and credentials. For example, Watenpaugh, Fricke, and Siegel (2013) found that the Syrian Embassy in Jordan, which was loyal to the Assad government, generally made their services unavailable to Syrians who had crossed into Jordan without a Syrian exit permit. Moreover, even if governments are willing to provide information, if records were looted or destroyed, then the information no longer exists in a reliable form.

¹⁵ For instance, data from the Global Coalition to Protect Education under Attack (2018) finds: Widely-reported deadly attacks have occurred in universities in Pakistan and Kenya, explosives were set at Dhaka University in Bangladesh at least 35 times between 2013 and 2015.

2b. Interrupted education / gaps in learning

With the closing of schools during conflict and/or with years spent in exile, refugees can suffer from interrupted schooling and gaps in learning. Many refugees only complete primary education or have partial secondary education. This issue is especially pronounced when it is considered by gender. **UNHCR data finds that refugee girls are less than half as likely to enrol in secondary schools as males.** This, of course, limits their opportunities to enter tertiary education. UNHCR (2018b) advocates that education:

...reduces girls' vulnerability to exploitation, sexual and gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and child marriage. According to UNESCO (2014), if all girls completed primary school, child marriage would fall by 14 per cent. If they all finished secondary school, it would plummet by 64 per cent. For refugee girls and women facing the increased risks that come with forced displacement, education is particularly important.

Interrupted education poses a barrier to higher education. First, a secondary school diploma is, in nearly all cases, required to enter tertiary education. Second, the gaps in learning must be addressed, prolonging the time it takes to enter or complete higher education, adding cost and time for both refugees and institutions. Third, those with significant learning gaps may feel frustrated or unmotivated due to related time and cost issues.

2c. Limited language proficiency

Having little or no proficiency in the language(s) of instruction is another barrier to higher education access. To demonstrate the scope of the issues, Table 2 lists the official languages of the five countries where most refugees originate and the official languages of the five countries that host the highest numbers of refugees for 2015. Except for Arabic, there is little overlap in the languages of countries of origin and the host countries.

In Kenya, which hosts approximately 486,000 refugees mainly fleeing from Somalia, South Sudan, Congo and Eritrea, proof of proficiency in English or Kiswahili, the languages of instruction in universities and colleges, is required. In West Africa, Ghana and Guinea require proficiency in English and French, respectively, for admission to universities, which partially explains English-speaking Liberian refugees' higher access to HEIs in Ghana as compared to in Guinea (Coffie, 2014).

Table 2.

Languages of top five countries of origins of refugees and top five refugee hosting countries (2015)

Top refugee Countries of Origin	Language(s) of Country of Origin	Top Refugee Hosting Countries	Language(s) of Hosting Country
Syria	Arabic is the official language with dialects Levantine in the west and Mesopotamian in the northeast. Kurmanji, a variety of Kurdish, is spoken in the Kurdish regions.	Turkey	Turkish is the official language. Kurmanji (in the south east), Arabic and Zazaki are also spoken.
Afghanistan	Pashto and Dari – are both official and most widely spoken. The government has also recognised five other languages for their regional importance: Hazaragi, Uzbek, Turkmen, Balochi, and Pashayi.	Pakistan	Urdu is the national language and English is the official language. In addition, Punjabi is spoken in the province of Punjab. Sindhi is mainly spoken in the province of Sind. Pashtu is spoken in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochi: Mainly spoken in the province of Baluchistan.
Somalia	Somali and Arabic are the official languages.	Lebanon	Arabic is the national language, and French and English are widely spoken.
Sudan	Sudanese Arabic and along with the tribal languages are spoken including Nubian language in the far north spoken by Nubians of Mahas, Dongola and Halfa.	Iran	Persian is the official language and is spoken by 53% of the population. Azerbaijani and other Turkic dialects, Kurdish, Gilaki and Mazandarani, Luri, Arabic and Balochi 2% are also spoken.
South Sudan	The official language is English . The indigenous languages with the most speakers are Dinka , Nuer, Bari, and Zande.	Ethiopia	Amharic (official), Oromo , Somali and Tigrinya are the widely spoken languages.

In Germany, the country hosting the most refugees in Europe, proof of the language at Level 2 in Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang (DSH) or Level 4 in Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache (TDN) is a prerequisite for university admission.

In Italy, Sweden, Austria, and France –countries with high asylum claims in Europe – refugees must show proof of C1 level language proficiency in Italian, Sweden, Austrian-German and French as part of the admissions process.¹⁶ At this advanced proficiency level, one should be able to:

- Understand a wide range of more demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning in them;
- Express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for the right expression;
- Use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. He/she can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing correct use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices (CEFR, 2018; British Council, 2018).

Language also limits higher education access in an indirect manner. Language is essential for integration and to the building of social networks, which are key sources of information about the education system in the host country (Watkins, 2012).

2d. Information barrier

Another barrier faced by refugees is a lack of knowledge or understanding of the higher education system in their host country. This can be exacerbated by a lack of availability of information and counselling services. This is particularly true for the 85% refugees in developing nations (UNHCR, 2018b; Watenaugh et al., 2013).

While numerous new initiatives make use of the Internet to disseminate information widely, limited Internet access, particularly in rural settings and developing countries, represents a significant barrier to this approach. For example, Kirk and Sherab (2016) report that only 2.5% of Syrian youth in Jordan had accessed the Jami3til Initiative online database offered in Arabic by UNESCO in July 2015. Crea and Sparnon (2017) also find that lack of access to technology and the Internet, as well as cultural and linguistic mismatches between Western-oriented online education and students' backgrounds, present hurdles to students attempting to access higher education in developing countries.

¹⁶ C1 is the fifth level in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). C2 is considered full mastery.

2e. Prohibitive cost of higher education

The cost of higher education is a barrier to higher education access. Tuition fees vary widely by country, and by type of institution - such as public or private and/or diploma or degree granting institutions. In the 2013/2014 AY, England and United States, with fees of 8,000 USD/year, had the highest tuition rates for public tertiary institutions (OECD, 2016). In some countries, such as Brazil, Denmark, and Finland, there are no tuition fees. However, the cost of higher education extends beyond tuition. The additional costs include study materials, health insurance and food over the period of study. Thus, even when there are no tuition fees, there are still other costs to consider.

Selected countries taken from UNHCR data on the 2017 DAFI scholarship costs show large variability in higher education costs across sub-Saharan Africa (see Table 3). While Ethiopia had a scholarship cost of 685 USD, Botswana's was 6,548 USD. Ethiopia's government subsidises tuition for refugees, while Botswana, as a result of resource constraints, does not do so (UNHCR, 2018b).

Table 3.

DAFI Programme in Sub-Saharan Africa (Selected Countries)

Country	Female	Male	Budget	Avg. scholarship cost (USD)
Benin	2	2	20,775	4,155
Botswana	4	4	52,383	6,548
Cameroon	45	105	329,966	2,200
Chad	45	91	382,174	2,810
Ethiopia	182	547	499,096	685
Niger	1	8	42,653	4,739
South Africa	60	82	614,736	4,329
Uganda	151	287	818,471	1,869

Note. Adapted from "The Other One Per Cent. Refugee Students in Higher Education: DAFI Annual Report 2017" by UNHCR (2018b), p.28.

Tuition fees also differ widely by students' residency status. Public institutions differentiate between lower 'home fees' for citizens and permanent residents and higher 'international fees' for other students. Certain countries waive tuition fees for refugees, while other countries offer the home fee tuition rate, and others consider refugees as international students. For example, Watenpaugh et al. (2013) found that the University of Jordan (a public HEI) charged refugees foreign student fees that

made the school nearly as expensive as private universities in Jordan. Meanwhile, Coffie (2014) found that refugees in Ghanaian universities paid tuition fees that were approximately double that of domestic students.¹⁷

Not only the actual cost, but the opportunity cost of higher education for refugees must also be considered. In addition to the potential debt, losing out on earnings over the four years of study, could be a price that refugees consider too high to pay for the remote benefits of future earnings. This is compounded by findings that show that many refugees feel an immense pressure to financially support their families and feel an urgency to work. Even those who manage to enter higher education studies often work part-time or even full-time, in order to send remittances to support siblings, parents and others who remain in refuge or asylum contexts (Ferede, 2014).

2f. Host country limited resources to expand higher education to refugees

Eighty-five per cent of refugees are hosted in developing regions. In mid-2017, refugees from South Sudan were hosted in the world's least developed countries – including Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, The Central African Republic, and Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2018b).

Developing countries that struggle to educate their own citizens with scarce resources can be overwhelmed. They may not have the means to absorb refugees in their higher education systems. In many countries in the Global South hosting refugees, there are limited numbers of available institutions, faculty and resources (such as library books, computers, and desks).

Of all countries, Turkey sheltered the greatest number of refugees, hosting 3.5 million by mid-2017, followed by Pakistan (1.4 million), Lebanon (998,900), Iran (979,400), Germany (970,400), Bangladesh (932,200) and Sudan (906,600). Data from UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) identifies education expenditures in the top five refugee hosting countries (see Table 4).

¹⁷ Moreover, asylum seekers who are still in the process of receiving a decision on their asylum claim are often considered to be international students and would need to pay international fees.

Table 4.

Percentage of Education Expenditure of Total Government Spending in Top Refugee Hosting Countries (Varied Years)

Host country	% Education Expenditure
Turkey	13.13 (2014)
Pakistan	12.5 (2017)
Lebanon	8.58 (2013)
Iran	19.3 (2016)
Germany	11.1 (2014)

Note: “% Education Expenditure” reported as per cent of total government spending, data from UIS (2018).

Education spending by percentage of government expenditure in Pakistan is larger than in Germany. However, the education budget of the country is smaller. Thus, when we look at spending *per student* at the tertiary level, Pakistan at (1,367.26 USD) spends much less than Germany (17,148 USD) (UIS, 2018).

2g. Legislative Challenges

Institutional ordinances and regulations can make it difficult for higher education institutions to provide access and support for refugees. For example, a 2016 survey conducted by the Swedish Council for Higher Education (2016) identified a variety of legislative and ordinance barriers as limiting and restrictive¹⁸ for refugees’ access to higher education in Sweden. A few are noted here:

1. Access and eligibility

- Language: There is a requirement of step 3 Swedish for eligibility, even though it may not be necessary for the subject

2. Tuition

- Higher Education Ordinance prohibits asylum-seekers’ right to participate in free higher education

3. Recognition/validation and prior learning

- The rules for prior learning are unclear
-

4. Lack of resources, contract education, other forms of funding

- The rules about which organisations may fund education are restrictive

Other legislation in the host country can exacerbate many of the barriers refugees face in accessing HEIs. For instance, laws that prevent refugees from working hinder their ability to finance their education. In addition, legislation that restricts freedom of entry and exit from refugee camps limits refugees' access to services to assist with application processes, and their ability to attend, if accepted (Coffie, 2014; Watenough et al., 2013; Zeus, 2011).

2h. Insecurity in host countries

Insecure conditions of violent conflict, personal safety or authoritarian regimes in host countries represent a challenge to refugees' access to higher education. Coffie (2014) found security constraints affecting refugees and nationals alike in Guinea to be the main factor resulting in Liberian refugees' more limited access to higher education in Guinea than in Ghana. In addition, Dahya and Dryden-Peterson (2017) describe how sexual assault against women in Dadaab refugee camp in Northern Kenya decrease women's freedom of movement and, therefore, their ability to access higher education opportunities. Moreover, the 2007 DAFI report also cited 'deteriorating situations' in five West African countries as the reason for closing these DAFI programmes, as the opportunities for refugee students to attend HEIs 'became almost inexistent' (p. 25). Indeed, the DAFI policy and guidelines indicate that when UNHCR selects host countries to offer DAFI scholarships, they consider "an environment of political stability" among their criteria, stating, 'an environment of political stability is a prerequisite for successful DAFI implementation' (UNHCR, 2009, p. 11).

PART III: INCENTIVES AND PROGRAMMES

This section examines various initiatives that have been developed in order to address the challenges and barriers to refugees' access to higher education.

3a. Alternative credential evaluation schemes

As indicated, missing education credentials and/or lack of proof of prior learning has a negative impact on refugees' access to higher education. Establishing a recognition procedure for refugees without such documentation is essential, since it: 1) Provides a method for institutions to ensure that applicants are qualified; 2) Enables refugees and those in refugee-like situations to prove their competencies and preparedness for higher education.

International and regional conventions establish various nations' commitment to the recognition of qualifications, with specific clauses that address those in refugee-like situations, including:

- Article 7 of the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Council of Europe, 1997);
- Article 7 of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (UNESCO, 2011);
- Article III.2, paragraph 5, of the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States (UNESCO, 12 December 2014);
- The Djibouti Declaration on Regional Conference on Refugee Education in IGAD Member States (Intergovernmental Authority on Development, 2017) and the Nairobi Declaration (UNESCO, 2018) in which African States committed to establishing certification recognition schemes, particularly highlighting inclusion of refugees and returnees;
- The launch of UNESCO's Global Convention project advocating for a fair and just evaluation process that places the burden of proof on the recognition authority, and aims to build the evaluation capacity of institutions.

In addition to these conventions, organizations and higher education institutions worldwide are introducing alternative recognition procedures to make the process more systematised, streamlined and consistent.

In Europe, ENIC-NARIC¹⁹ recommends a fair and transparent evaluation process and has also set up support for institutions that require assistance with the credential evaluation process. Part of the additional steps in validating prior knowledge include:

- Examinations to allow refugees to demonstrate knowledge, competencies and skills;
- An interview with a committee of experts for additional contextual information;
- Sworn statements by applicants.

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) has developed a two-step process to alternative credentialing. The first phase is the creation of an educational portfolio with supporting evidence. The second includes an evaluation interview. NOKUT developed this process by first conducting a pilot in 2004 with Oslo University College and Narvik University College where they evaluated 20 candidates from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and the former Yugoslavia, all with engineering backgrounds. Out of these 20, four candidates received recognition of their degrees as equivalent to a three-year Norwegian bachelor's degree, 12 candidates received recognition as having one or two years of higher education, and four did not receive any recognition of higher education (Egner, 2015).

Based on a successful pilot of NOKUT's alternative qualifications assessment process, the Council of Europe has launched the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees Project. Partners include UNHCR, the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, the Conference of University Rectors of Italy, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, and qualification recognition centres in Armenia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and the UK. The passport, while not legally binding, is a standardised and structured document that identifies skill sets and qualifications meant to assist refugees to access higher education and employment.

¹⁹ ENIC: European Network of Information Centres in the European Region
NARIC: National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union

3b. Host language-learning initiatives

Language proficiency is needed not only for successful integration into host societies but also to access educational opportunities. The following are a few examples of initiatives aimed at addressing the language barrier to higher education access.

Since 2016, through its ERASMUS+ programme, the European Commission has supported 100,000 refugees to access Online Linguistic Support (OLS). It provides training in a variety of languages and is free of cost.

Babbel, a private company, provides online language lessons. Since 2016, it has partnered with the Senate of Berlin, Kiron Open Higher Education and Hoffnungsträger Foundation to facilitate language learning courses by providing €1 million worth of language courses to various refugee-focused projects. Since the majority of refugees with whom they work have at least a basic knowledge of either English or French, the courses in German are actually provided in English or French, rather than Arabic. Babbel also trains volunteer language teachers for face-to-face lessons at refugee centres.

Since 2015, the University of Grenoble has provided one-month trainings in French language to refugees and asylum seekers settled or accommodated in the region through its 'Passerelle Solidarité' (Solidarity Link). This four-month training is for refugees and asylum seekers who want to continue their studies in France and includes French classes, French culture classes and methodology classes. The training is designed to help students enter a higher education programme in Grenoble or anywhere else in France.

3c. Scholarship schemes

Scholarships aim to address the cost of higher education. Since the majority of refugees are hosted in developing countries, scholarship initiatives for this vulnerable group are part of achieving this

target.²⁰ Scholarships either partially or fully address the cost of higher education by covering tuition, related costs or both. In general, scholarships can be grouped under four categories:

1. SCHOLARSHIPS THAT TARGET REFUGEES INSIDE COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM

These scholarships are intended for refugees studying in the country of first asylum. As such, nearly all of these scholarships are countries in the Global South, where the majority of refugees are hosted. The oldest, and most often used model for other scholarships providers, is UNHCR's DAFI programme.

*DAFI Programme*²¹

For 25 years, UNHCR and the German Government have offered the Albert Einstein Deutsche Akademische Flüchtlingsinitiative (DAFI) scholarship programme, intended to assist refugees' access to higher education. **Since its launch in 1992, the DAFI programme has assisted 14,000 young refugees in 50 countries, the vast majority of which are in the Global South.** In 2017 alone, the DAFI programme supported over 6,700 students who studied in 720 institutions (see Table 5 for details of the DAFI programme from 2015-2017).

The DAFI programme awards scholarships through a selection process that begins with widely publicised calls for applications. In 2017, approximately 36% of applicants were shortlisted and interviewed by a multi-partner selection panel. Of those, 60% were offered a DAFI scholarship.

In 31 of the 50 DAFI countries, refugees have the same access conditions as nationals such as in Botswana, Cameroon, Chad, Ecuador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia. UNHCR negotiates with governments for reduced fees for refugee students, including DAFI scholars, as it has successfully done in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sudan, and Yemen. Other times,

²⁰ The high cost of higher education, particularly affecting youth in developing countries, is receiving increased attention in global education planning. SDG 4, target 4.b aims to, by 2020 'substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.'

²¹ The text and table are based on UNHCR's publication, *The Other One Per Cent. Refugee Students in Higher Education: DAFI Annual Report 2017*. <http://www.unhcr.org/publications/education/5bc4affc4/other-percent-refugee-students-higher-education-dafi-annual-report-2017.html>



specific arrangements are made. For instance, in 2017 the UNHCR and the Ministry of Higher Education in Iraq agreed that DAFI students undertaking 5-year courses, including medicine, would have one tuition-free year.

The DAFI programme extends beyond financial support. The scholarship scheme covers tuition and related study costs such as accommodation, food, fees and subsistence allowances. Moreover, it includes remedial and language support and support to aid retention, such as psychosocial counselling.

In 2016, UNHCR and the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) decided to cooperate globally to facilitate access to, or continuation of, higher education studies in the five Syrian crisis countries Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Doing so, the two organisations linked the resources of two projects: the DAFI programme which focuses on bachelor's degree studies and the HOPES project of the DAAD with its consortium partners, which focuses on master's degrees.

Table 5.

DAFI Global overview of developments 2015-2017

Year	2015	2016	2017
Number of students	2,321	4,652	6,723
Percent female	42%	44%	41%
Graduated	364	449	547
Newly admitted	678	2,718	2,582
# countries of study	40	37	50
Top 5 countries of study	297 Ethiopia 232 Iran 187 Uganda 146 Kenya 143 Pakistan	825 Turkey 512 Ethiopia 428 Iran 358 Lebanon 293 Egypt	818 Turkey 729 Ethiopia 721 Jordan 490 Pakistan 438 Uganda
Top 5 countries of origin	428 Afghanistan 363 Somalia 326 Syrian Arab Republic 277 DR of the Congo 179 Sudan	1,790 Syrian Arab Republic 712 Afghanistan 454 Somalia 325 DR of the Congo 311 Sudan	2,528 Syrian Arab Republic 942 Afghanistan 667 Somalia 475 South Sudan 404 Sudan
Top fields of study	436 Commercial and Business administration 373 Medical and health- related science 247 Social and behavioural sciences 206 Engineering 186 Education science and teacher training	845 Medical and health-related science 807 Engineering 800 Commercial and Business administration 448 Social and behavioural sciences 317 Humanities	1,271 Medical and health-related science 1,217 Commercial and Business administration 962 Engineering 780 Social and behavioural sciences 542 Humanities

2. SCHOLARSHIPS FOR REFUGEES PROVIDED BY HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Many institutions support refugees directly. For instance, the UNHCR-Refugee Higher Education Program (RHEP) supports refugees in Japan to complete a four-year undergraduate degree at eight institutions in the country. Students' tuition fees and other study expenses are funded directly by the universities who may also offer additional stipends (UNHCR, 2018b).

3. SCHOLARSHIPS SUPPORTING FEMALE REFUGEES

In Australia, Claudette Elaro Refugee Women's Scholarship accepts applications from female students of refugee backgrounds living in Australia for five years or less. These women must reside in New South Wales, and attend an institution approved by Settlement Services of Australia.

Another scholarship for female students, but that is viable worldwide, is the International Federation of University Women's Hegg Hoffet Fund for Displaced Women. It is offered to female graduate students (and in special cases, undergraduate females) who have been displaced as a result of war, political upheaval or other serious emergencies, including refugees. GWI's Hegg Hoffet Fund also provides short-term grants for refresher courses for re-entry into the candidates' professional field (or if that is not possible, training courses leading to some other employment), and for language training and other courses to assist with integration into their new countries. In addition to financial assistance, GWI's national and local groups also provide refugees with moral support to help them to adjust to life in a different country.

4. SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

By mid-2015, over four million Syrians fled the country. Many scholarships have been established to support Syrian refugees access higher education. For instance, the Institute of International Education (IIE) has compiled a Syria Consortium for Higher Education in Crisis that lists hundreds of colleges and universities worldwide that provide scholarships specifically for Syrian students. In 2016, the EU announced 400 scholarships for Syrian refugees and Japan has accepted 150 Syrian refugees to their schools (as exchange students). In Canada, universities have partnered with community-based non-profit Lifeline Syria to raise 27,000 CAD per targeted refugee family. Ryerson University alumni raised 4.5 million CAD through 102 sponsorships that will go on to help 150 refugee families (Ryerson University, 2018). Many of the 80 public institutions in Canada offer similar initiatives. Furthermore, to increase accessibility to scholarship information, UNESCO

launched the Jami3ti Initiative ('My University' Initiative) in July 2015 (Kirk & Sherab, 2016). The Jami3ti Initiative is an online database in Arabic of scholarship opportunities and resources to help students better understand the application process. This website consolidates the widely dispersed scholarship information into a single, searchable platform, proving invaluable to Syrian refugee students with approximately 2,000 opportunities listed.

SCHOLARSHIP CLEARINGHOUSES

To aid all refugees locate scholarships, several organizations also provide clearinghouse that compile opportunities for asylum-seekers and refugees:

[UNHCR Scholarship Portal](#)

UNHCR's Tertiary Education team launched a scholarship portal offering practical advice for prospective students and technical advice to scholarship.

[The Refugee Center](#)

The Refugee Center offers listings of scholarships open to refugees and immigrants in the United States.

[European University Association's Refugee Welcome Map](#)

By January 2017, EUA Refugees Welcome Map had collected approximately 250 initiatives from higher education institutions and related organisations in 31 countries.

[Student Action for Refugees \(STAR\)](#)

STAR lists scholarships viable in higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.

[VINCE list](#)

The VINCE list Includes scholarships with many other initiatives at integrating and supporting refugees in a variety of areas, including with higher education.

3d. Refugee peer-to-peer initiatives

Peer-to-peer initiatives refer to programmes in which youth work to support fellow youth who are similar to them (e.g. country or region of origin) to access or persist in higher education.

SYRIAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

In 2016, four Syrians in the diaspora founded Syrian Youth Empowerment (SYE) to help displaced Syrian students continue their higher education. The organisation has a working budget of 12,700 USD over two years with a grant from Blossom Hill Foundation and individual donations. The organisation supports displaced Syrian students by mentoring them through the institutional and scholarship application processes. Vetted mentors who are in or have completed their tertiary education serve as mentors. For the 2018-2019 Academic Year (AY), out of the 36 students who applied to enter university with support of SYE mentors, eight were female. Of the 32 who were accepted, three deferred. Out of the remaining 29, 23 received scholarships, while one is pending (a different cycle as a transfer student). For the 2018-2019 AY, SYE-supported students received 10.752 Million USD in scholarships (4,032,000 USD the first year and 6,720,000 USD the second year). The intended majors of the 2018 cohort are listed in Table 6.

Table 6.

Majors for the 2018-2019 SYE Entering Class

Architecture / International Relations
Behavioural Neuroscience
Chemistry
Civil Engineering
Computer Science
Computer Science / Photography
Computer Science / Theoretical physics
Computer Science /Artificial Intelligence
Computer Science /Information Technology Management
Engineering/Business
Physics
Politics/Marketing
Pre-med Biology
Sociology
Software Engineer/Computer Science

3e. Online and blended higher education for refugees

CONNECTED LEARNING IN CRISIS CONSORTIUM

The Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium (CLCC) is a network of universities, NGOs, and blended learning providers that combines online and face-to-face instruction to offer learning programmes to refugees in their home environments. By 2017 over 7,000 students had participated in the CLCC programmes (UNHCR, 2018b).

UNHCR and the CLCC have identified blended learning as important to bringing learning opportunities to refugees and are working on understanding how access to higher education could be scaled up through online and blended learning especially in low-resource environments. The consortium works in part by identifying innovative methods and disseminating good practices to meet the demand for higher education for refugees.

To this end, the CLCC has developed a *Quality Guidelines Playbook* that provides rich resources on the provision of connected learning, including case studies. The intention of this Playbook is to improve future programme designs and implementation by sharing knowledge of the types of blended learning programmes that CLCC members have implemented since the early 2000s (CLCC, 2017).

Table 7.

Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium Members (2017)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian Catholic University• Arizona State University• Centreity• INASP• Institute for International Education• Jesuit Refugee Service• Jesuit Worldwide Learning• Kenyatta University• Kepler• Kiron• MIT• Mosaik	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open University UK• Opening University for Refugees• Purdue University• Southern New Hampshire University• UNHCR• University of British Columbia• University of Geneva-InZone• University of Nairobi• University of Ottawa – Community Mobilisation in Crisis• World University Service of Canada• York University
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BORDERLESS HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES

Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) Project is a development initiative housed at the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University that provides university programmes to refugees and local host students in Dadaab Kenya using a blended learning model. The BHER consortium includes five partners: Kenyatta University, Moi University, University of British Columbia, York University and Windle International Kenya.

In 2010-2012, the BHER model was designed through research grants from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and MasterCard Foundation. Since its launch in 2013, it has received funding from Global Affairs Canada, Open Society Foundations, UNHCR Kenya and private donations.

BHER coordinates with Canadian and Kenyan universities to offer internationally recognised and accredited academic programmes at the level of certificate, diplomas and degrees to refugee and local populations; it also supports onsite and online programme delivery through the BHER Learning Centre located in Dadaab. The delivery of one certificate and two diploma programmes are in teacher education at the primary and secondary level and six degree programmes in education, health and liberal arts.

Credit transfer among various university programmes allows for “stackable” credentials. Students are able to earn a certificate or diploma at each level of study, incrementally building towards earning a degree. Since 2013, a total of 256 students (56 female) have completed their certificate and diploma studies in education at the primary and secondary level. Since September 2016, 107 students of Cohort 1 have engaged in one of the four undergraduate degrees in education, health or geography offered by York University, Kenyatta University or Moi University, with 80 now retained. About 90% of these students (of whom 19% are women) are on track to graduate by the end of 2018.

In September 2017, 86 students of Cohort 2 started studies in one of the degree programmes in the education field offered by York University or Kenyatta University with 77 now retained. About 80% of these students (of whom 12% female) plan to graduate from one of the programmes by December 2019 after the completion of the current grant from the Government of Canada. The

gender breakdown of the programme is 36.7% female since 1978 and was 45% female for the 2017-2018 AY. The programme is aiming for 50% female participation next year.

KIRON OPEN HIGHER EDUCATION

Kiron Open Higher Education is a German-based non-profit organisation that has two strands of delivering courses. In one strand, refugees who lack documents or other requirements to enter higher education in their host country can take Kiron designed Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on platforms such as Coursera, Edx, FUN or Open Classrooms. Kiron calls these courses 'micro credentials.' In addition, Kiron includes language and preparatory courses to complete the online courses.

In the second strand, students who have the required documents and language to enter higher education institutions are able to participate. In this case, Kiron provides application support and the transfer of 60 Kiron credits to the course of study with partner universities. The programme also provides buddy programmes, mentorship, counselling and student guidance. In 2017, Kiron held its pilot phase of guiding students through the application process.

In 2018, there were 3,200 students on Kiron campuses, with 56 university partners in eight countries (see Table 8). Disciplines are limited to business, economics, computer science, mechanical engineering, social work and political science. Kiron is currently developing two study tracks for students in Jordan and Lebanon where they can transfer to partner universities to study for a bachelor's degree in computer science or business & economics.

Table 8.
Kiron Student Demographics (2018)

Number of Students	Total	Male	Female
	3,300	2,739 (83%)	561 (17%)
Majors			
Business and Economics	30.00%	28.73%	36.08%
Computer Science	36.74%	38.88%	26.46%
Mechanical Engineering	9.15%	10.12%	4.64%
Political Science	10.51%	10.87%	8.93%
Social Work	13.60%	11.41%	23.88%
Country of Residence			
Germany	38.31%		
Turkey	12.71%		
Jordan	9.10%		
Indonesia	6.33%		
Kenya	5.70%		
France	5.67%		
Other	22.19%		
Country of Origin			
Syrian Arab Republic	41.43%		
Afghanistan	9.21%		
Somalia	6.06%		
Iraq	3.56%		
Sudan	3.56%		

Note. Data by country of origin and residence by gender was not made available.

3f. Initiatives supporting academics in need of refuge

Academics who are under threat have also become a key concern of higher education. Below are two programmes that support this population group. By protecting academics from regions of crisis, these programmes can allow for HEIs to be restored to functional levels when instructors are later able to return to their home institutions. Sustaining and restoring HEIs in conflict-affected regions is key to ensuring access to higher education for youth who are currently refugees or asylum seekers (Barakat & Milton, 2015).

SCHOLARS AT RISK

Scholars at Risk (SAR) began at the University of Chicago in 1999 and launched its network with a major international conference in June 2000. Since then Scholars at Risk has provided sanctuary and assistance to more than 300 academics each year. It protects these scholars by arranging temporary research and teaching positions at institutions in their network. A key advocate of academic freedom, it also investigates and speaks out against attacks on higher education communities.

In 2002, SAR partnered with IIE and the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund. The Fund provided fellowships to SAR scholars facing grave threats so that they may escape dangerous conditions and continue their academic work in safety.

CARA

Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) is a UK based organisation that provides urgent support to academics at risk, those forced into exile, and those in their home country but in danger. CARA is the leading organisation doing this work in Europe. It is unique in its focus on helping those who are still in immediate danger, rather than already in exile, and in providing 2- or 3-year award packages, rather than short stipends. Funding is provided by a number of foundations, such as Harbour Foundation and the Murdoch charitable trust; the institutions also contribute in kind and offer services *pro bono*.

Over 115 universities make up the CARA UK Universities Network, including Cardiff University, University of Cambridge, University of Essex, University of London, Glasgow School of Art, and University of Liverpool.

In 2006, CARA launched the Iraq Programme (2006-2011) through its office in Amman, Jordan. It undertook cooperation activities designed to help rebuild Iraqi research and teaching capacities by bringing academics in Iraq together with those in Jordan and elsewhere, with their counterparts in the UK.

In 2009, the Zimbabwe Programme became CARA's second regional programme, created in response to an increase of academics fleeing Zimbabwe, amid reports of a dramatic decline in the quality of higher education. The programme offered grants and fellowships to pay for vital

equipment and supplies, and in 2012 established a 'Virtual Lecture Hall' at the University of Zimbabwe that allowed Zimbabwean academics in exile and others to connect in real time.

In 2016 CARA launched its Syria Programme in order to provide support to academics affected by the Syria crisis with Syrian academics in exile, in Turkey, Lebanon. In the 2016/17 'pilot phase', with the active participation of UK, Turkish and other universities, CARA organised workshops in Turkey on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Academic Skills Development (ASD), to lay the foundations for future research collaborations. The first Syria Programme Fellows were hosted by UK universities on short-term research visits, and UK and Syrian academics and others worked together on research to help establish the true state of higher education in Syria, before and since 2011, to get a better sense of how exiled Syrian academics could be helped to prepare to return, when it is safe to do so.

An 18-month second phase of the programme was launched in late 2017 and includes EAP, ASD, Research Incubation Visits and a CARA-Commissioned Research Project – supplemented by a new fifth strand, a research funding initiative. The aim of the CARA Syria Programme is to nurture important discipline clusters, while allowing Syrian colleagues to develop an invaluable international resource on which to draw in the task of rebuilding higher education in Syria. The second phase is funded primarily by a grant of 850,000 USD from the Open Society Foundations and its Higher Education Support Program.

3g. Capacity building initiatives of faculty and staff at HEIs

Staff and faculty at HEIs also require capacity building to understand how to best support refugee learners. Two such initiatives that focus on institutional actors are:

INHERE

The Higher Education Supporting Refugees in Europe (InHere) project is another Erasmus + programme with the purpose of making access to European institutes of higher education more accessible for refugees and to help them integrate the host communities. The programme was implemented by the Union of Mediterranean Universities (UNIMED), in partnership with the European Universities Association (EUA), Campus France, the University of Barcelona and the University of La Sapienza.

HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAM

Open Society's Higher Education Support Program works with grantees and partners in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, the Higher Education Support Program supports innovative teaching and research, intellectual freedom, the expansion of marginalised groups' access to higher education (including refugees), and good practices in university governance.

3h. Resettlement through higher education

Resettlement into a third country through admission to higher education has gained interest in recent years. For instance, in 2017 the JICA-managed Japanese Initiative for the Future of Syrian Refugees (JISR) Programme admitted 19 refugee students (for master's degree studies) from Jordan and Lebanon into Japan higher education institutions. Since family members can accompany students, a total of 36 persons were admitted into Japan. JISR aims to accept 20 students per year from 2017-2021. The programme intends for students to reintegrate into their countries of origin, but if they are unable, there are opportunities for resettlement.

EUROPEAN RESETTLEMENT NETWORK

Looking for new approaches to resettlement, the European Resettlement Network (ERN) has examined the feasibility of higher education and scholarships as a complementary pathway of refugee admission to Europe.²² ERN's minimum recommendations are that initiatives:

- A. Protect against refoulement;
- B. Uphold the right to apply for asylum;
- C. Do not jeopardise the safety and security of refugees by undermining their legal status and rights;
- D. Ensure that participating students' economic needs are met during the programme, including protection against hardship or destitution;

²² For more read European Resettlement Network's (2018), Student Scholarships for Refugees: Expanding complementary pathways of admission to Europe. http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc/files/ERN%2B%20Student%20Scholarships%20for%20Refugees%20-%20Expanding%20complementary%20pathways%20of%20admission%20to%20Europe_0.pdf

- E. Ensure that the programme does not adversely affect students' psychological and social wellbeing and that access to health- and psycho-social care is provided for those who need it;
- F. Ensure students are fully aware and consent to all the relevant details regarding the effect on their rights and responsibilities of participation in the scholarship programme, departure from the country of previous asylum, and stay in a new country;
- G. Ensure the right to remain lawfully in the country of scholarship beyond the period of study in the event that return or re-entry to the previous country of asylum or to the country of origin is not possible, including the possibility to convert refugees' visas into work or other visa types.

(European Resettlement Network, 2018, p. 37)

LIFELINE SYRIA

In 2015, in the city of Toronto, three universities: University of Toronto, York University, and OCAD University joined the Ryerson University-led Lifeline Syria Challenge to offer a response to the growing humanitarian crisis in Syria. Since then, it has grown to 248 sponsoring groups.

When it launched, this network of Toronto-based universities had a goal to facilitate the sponsorship of over 300 Syrian refugees across Canada, through the Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees programme. Teams of volunteers, including students, staff, faculty, alumni and community members were motivated to raise funds and commit their time to support the refugee families upon arrival. This initiative has enabled students on campus to offer their skills and knowledge to help facilitate the integration of these resettled families by developing an online portal to share information and delivering workshops for families on relevant topics. A number of additional initiatives at these institutions have taken shape, providing opportunities to engage more of the Canadian public in the welcoming of former refugees, on their pathway to integration in their new communities.

In 2018, Lifeline Syria has sponsored 1,074 Syrians through 248 Private Sponsor Groups and with 8,060,600 CAD in sponsorship funds (Ryerson University, 2018).

CASE STUDY: WUSC STUDENT REFUGEE PROGRAMME

Drawing on an original data, this case study outlines how it is possible not only to offer higher education access to refugees but to also offer a pathway to resettlement and integration.²³

Since 1978, Canada's World University Service of Canada (WUSC) Student Refugee Programme (SRP) has resettled over 1,800 refugees from 39 countries of origin into over 80 college and university campuses. This initiative is described in depth below, as it demonstrates how a programme supporting refugees' access to higher education can utilise several of the strategies described in this section: host language learning, scholarship schemes, capacity building for higher education institutions, peer-to-peer initiatives, and resettlement through higher education.

The SRP is primarily a student-driven endeavour mobilised by groups of students, faculty, and staff on local university campuses across Canada. Students at Canadian higher education institutions actively sponsor refugee students through Local Committees / Constituent Groups. These committees raise funds and awareness for the program, engage other students, hold referendums through Student Unions and provide the day-to-day social and academic support to SRP students.

WUSC is able to do this work because of Canada's Private Refugee Sponsorship Program under which several groups may sponsor refugees. One of these groups is Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) - incorporated humanitarian, religious, ethnic, community or service organisations with a special affiliation and contract with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to sponsor refugees. Since 1981, WUSC, as a humanitarian organisation, has been one of about 80 such Sponsorship Agreement Holders who are permitted to sponsor refugees in various local communities through the use of Constituent Groups.²⁴ WUSC SRP currently accepts applications from refugees in Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, and Malawi.

²³ The information in this case study is adapted from a longer analysis (Ferede, 2013)

²⁴ In the case of WUSC, Local Committees at universities and colleges act as its Constituent Groups, allowing them to sponsor refugees onto their campus communities. Like other private sponsors, WUSC agrees to be responsible for providing financial and resettlement support for the refugee's first year in Canada. In general, the amount of financial support that sponsoring groups are required to provide approximates local social assistance rate levels that vary by region, by family size and age of dependents.

A 2013 study found that the benefits for refugee youth include finding a way out of difficult refugee camp conditions, having access to higher education, developing skills towards a career and having the opportunity to become a Canadian citizen (Ferede, 2014). An internal 2007 evaluation report found that sponsored students also become civically engaged, support development in the home regions, and tend to join society groups and associations (WUSC, 2007a).

The program's benefits also extend to Canadian youth. Volunteers tended to vote at higher rates than the Canadian average and be more politically engaged. They also reported developing communication, mentoring, and negotiating skills because of their involvement in SRP. Moreover, teachers in refugee camps indicated that the program had a positive impact on high school graduations since students persisted in the hopes of a post-secondary education and eligibility into the highly competitive WUSC program.

Process of Bringing the Student Refugee Program to a Canadian Campus

It takes approximately two years of planning and fundraising for a Local Committee to advance from expressing interest in sponsoring a refugee to having them arrive on their campus. From the onset, WUSC head office supports Local Committees in their sponsorship efforts by providing procedural, promotional and fundraising guidance through booklets and posted online text and video resources.

During this planning phase, students are strongly advised to involve faculty or staff as advisors in order to 'ensure long-term sustainability'. In addition, Local Committees need to also engage and develop strong relationships with various university departments and offices, such as the Admissions Office, President's Office, International Student's Office and the Students' Union. During the implementation phase, these offices play a key role in the admissions process of refugee applicants, in facilitating institutional waivers on tuition and housing and providing assistance with documentation. Since the support of institutional leadership and staff is crucial to the success of the program on a particular campus, Local Committees spend initial conversations explaining the program, gauging interest and building trust. If they have university support, Local Committees then conduct campus-wide and community awareness events to promote the plight of refugees and the significance of the program.

Local Committees are responsible for raising the funds needed for the sponsorship of one refugee student for a minimum of 12 months. Using a sample budget set by WUSC as a guideline (approximately 20,000 - 30,000 CAD per refugee student), Local Committee members first assess their financial capacity before developing a fundraising strategy. This usually includes holding referendums through the Student Union where the student body votes on proposed tuition levies – mandatory fees - that will go toward the cost of sponsorship. Sometimes, pending on faculty support, members can also make an appeal for faculty levies or payroll deductions. Successful acquisition of waivers on tuition, residence, meal plans, and textbooks through various university offices, can reduce the overall cost. Committees may also approach off-campus individuals, businesses, and organisations for cash or in-kind donations toward items such as clothes, bicycles or computers for the sponsored student. Finally, after raising awareness, engaging the required parties, and securing the necessary funding, the campus Local Committee is ready to submit a sponsorship plan to WUSC.

The programme has tremendous variation at the institution level. Some universities are seasoned sponsors, while others are new. For instance, Local Committees at University of Alberta have sponsored students since 1988. Meanwhile, the first refugee student was not sponsored onto University of Ontario's Institute of Technology until 2012. Tuition levy support also differs significantly. Data from 2010-2011 indicates a per-student levy of 15.00 CAD at Algoma University but 1.00 CAD at McGill University. Yet because of the large difference in the number of students who attend these institutions, Algoma's Local Committee raised 15,145 CAD from levies while McGill raised 30,000 CAD. The majority of Local Committees sponsor one student per year. Others, such as those at the University of British Columbia and Dalhousie, sponsor multiple students annually. In addition, most refugee youth are financially supported for 12-months, while those at a handful of institutions, such as Simon Fraser and Wilfred Laurier, are supported over multiple years. According to Senior Program Officers, strong support from university leadership and Local Committees' success with securing sustainable funding, account for these differences.

The Selection, Admission, and Arrival of Refugee Students

The majority of the 1,216 youth sponsored from WUSC from 1978-2011 originate from African countries (over 85%). Surges in the countries of origin of sponsored students tend to correspond with political and civil war crisis in the given country.

September of 2015, WUSC partnered with Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada to encourage 200 institutions to implement or increase their support of the SRP on their campus, focusing on Syrian refugees. For the 2017 AY of the 160 refugee youth sponsored from Jordan, Lebanon, Kenya and Malawi, more than half originated from Syria.

WUSC works with international partners, such as Jesuit Refugee Services in Malawi and Windle Charitable Trust in Kenya, to administer the program within the camps. The complex selection, admission and preparation process takes approximately 16 months (from time of application), with concurrent activities occurring on Canadian campuses and in refugee camps.

Selection Process

The Student Refugee Program has strict criteria for eligibility and selection. Refugees must:

- Be a recognised refugee in your country of asylum (ex. a UNHCR convention refugee) or provide evidence of residency in Lebanon (e.g. statement from Lebanese authorities, national ID card, residency documentation, sponsor documents);
- Be between the age of 17-25;
- Have completed secondary school (O levels preferred);
- Be proficient in English or French;
- Be self-driven and mature;
- Be single without dependents and able to resettle in Canada.

Although a few exceptions have been made for a few single mothers, applicants must also be unmarried and without children. WUSC clarifies the age requirement by explaining that it underscores the program's focus of 'youth sponsoring youth' and that closeness in age with Local Committee members of mainly undergraduate students, is an important factor for the members to socially and emotionally support the sponsored student, relate, and learn from them (Angus & Serafin, 2009). Refugee youth must have earned a high-school diploma and, if applicable, pass the country's high-school completion exams.

Once WUSC's in-camp partners have screened applications for requirements, short-listed candidates are invited to sit for two-hour language tests. Those scoring a minimum of 50% in their language test are invited to panel interviews. A WUSC SRP program officer generally conducts these interviews,

along with a representative from the in-country partner and, perhaps, an UNHCR staff member. At this critical stage of the process, refugee youth are asked about their reasons for fleeing, motivations for applying to the program, and their intended field of study, in addition to other probing questions.

Within a few weeks to a month following interviews, students are notified whether or not they have been selected and WUSC sends the selected refugees' files to the Canadian High Commission for security clearance. From this point on, unless they learn that Citizenship and Immigration Canada has rejected the application, WUSC is committed to sponsoring the student. Everything that follows, such as language classes and computer training, is in preparation for entering Canada and university.

Admission into Canadian colleges and universities

Matching sponsored youth with a sponsoring institution is a complicated process, conducted in several steps. To start, WUSC determines how closely the qualifications (high school grades and language test scores) of selected refugees match with the admissions criteria of the sponsoring Canadian post-secondary institutions. Then, WUSC sends refugees' files to the Local Committees on campuses where they are most likely to be accepted. The admissions office at sponsoring institutions determine admissibility and those deemed admissible are ranked by Local Committee members according to those who might fit best on their campus, taking into account elements such as their academic interest and language level. If a refugee is not selected in the first round of the process, WUSC resends their file to other institutions.

In-depth interviews help WUSC to identify cases where candidates were not the age they stated or had forged academic documents. Applicants undergo in-person interviews with an immigration officer; if they are cleared, they are scheduled for medical clearance. By completing the country's immigration checks pre-departure, refugee youth arrive into Canada as permanent residents, a status that affords them many rights such as eligibility to work and take out student loans.

If the selected refugee has been living in an urban centre, they are required to move into the refugee camp for the pre-arrival training. Many refugee youth in Kenya and a few in Malawi are "incentive" teachers in the camp, a popular job for high school educated refugees. Since refugees cannot legally work in their country of asylum, they are given "volunteer" jobs and provided a small stipend. Many students were already teachers before being selected for WUSC.

Pre-departure and arrival into Canada

All admitted refugees receive pre-departure orientation by the International Organization on Migration. WUSC staff or volunteers deliver additional orientation sessions on what to expect in Canada, including aspects relating to the country's culture (how to greet someone), climate (and how to dress for it), to the nature of work in the country's post-secondary institutions. Since 2010, Malawian students have also benefited from several months of pre-departure sessions conducted by Canadian post-secondary student volunteers. By this point, many accepted students would have received a welcome package from the Local Committee that sometimes includes shirts with the university logo or a welcoming letter. Toward the end of August, the selected and admitted group of WUSC-sponsored refugee youth travels to the asylum country's international airport for their flight to Canada.

Local Committee members greet their sponsored students in August. However, the committees have done much in the way of preparation prior to the arrival of the sponsored refugee. They have registered the sponsored student in classes, signed them up for orientation, arranged their housing and meal plans, bought them toiletries and school supplies, purchased calling cards (or other means of making an international call), and prepared important Government forms ready so that refugee youth can apply for their Permanent Resident Card, Health Card and Social Insurance Number. When refugees arrive, Local Committees are required to help the sponsored refugee youth adjust, answer their questions, and orient them to the campus and community. According to program officer Ms. Manks, "the support is more intensive at first, but they play this role until the end of the sponsorship (12 months) and beyond." **In 2019-2020 WUSC will achieve gender parity for refugees resettled from Kenya with 53% of SRP candidates from the camps in Kenya being young women.**

PART IV: RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy

- **International agreements should be translated into national laws, policies, and procedures**

While refugees' rights to higher education are enshrined in numerous international and regional conventions, these agreements have not always translated into national laws and policies that provide refugees with access to higher education in practice. Countries need to ensure that they are. In addition, national laws and policies related to refugees in general, reduce higher education access

and should be revised. Specifically, policies that restrict refugees' movement in and out of camps are especially limiting.

- **Long-term budget planning must include higher education for refugees**

Refugee situations are increasingly protracted, and emergency humanitarian assistance and reliance on donor funding is insufficient to meet the demand of refugees for higher education. Rather, nations with high refugee populations should include the provision of higher education to refugees within their budget planning. To support these nations' efforts, the international community should provide stable financial support for higher education in developing countries with high refugee populations and countries suffering from economic crisis.

Funds should be specifically earmarked to support alternative credential evaluation processes or language learning initiatives in situations where these are the most significant barriers to refugees' access to HEIs and host country institutions lack the capacity to provide such services.

- **Encourage public-private partnerships**

Including the private sector in initiatives to support higher education for refugees could add much-needed funding and work to reduce the strain on public funds. Such partnerships can also streamline refugees' transition from higher education towards internship, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Public-private partnerships are needed to support scholarships, developing TVET curriculum and courses, providing spaces for training and can be entryways into various labour markets.

- **Consider private (community) refugee sponsorship model**

Allowing private sponsorship of refugees for resettlement can also reduce strains on public and multi-lateral funds. Inspired by Canada, in 2016, the United Kingdom also launched a community sponsorship scheme. Other countries should consider the WUSC SRP model as a way to allow organisations focused on higher education or a consortium of higher education institutions to sponsor refugees, not only increasing access to tertiary education *but also* to resettlement opportunities.

- **Sustainable integration on campus and in community**

Higher education campuses act as a microcosm of societies. In addition to developing human capital and skill sets, it is within campus life where life-long social connections are developed. Institutions should lead the way in integrating refugees within the university community and by extension the broader community; this can be done by encouraging refugee participation in student academic, athletic and social groups. Moreover, placing higher education initiatives for refugees within institutions' international relations department or within international student offices increases the likelihood for the initiatives to become sustainable. It also allows for more thoughtful coordination at inter- and intra- institutional levels.

- **Increase and support peer-to-peer initiatives**

Peer-to-peer initiatives offer students in host countries the opportunity to be globally minded, outward looking and humanitarian oriented. At the same time, they offer refugees an immediate social network that can support their integration, language learning, and overcoming information barriers. When peer-to-peer initiatives are formalised and involve sustainable funding, they can reach larger numbers of refugee youth and help relieve cost burdens of higher education.

- **Gender-focused initiatives**

Male students make up the majority of refugees participating in higher education. More programmes should be implemented to increase the number of girls completing secondary education and to deal with factors that serve as barriers to girls' education, such as safety, security, early marriage and contextual norms about the value of educating girls. Initiatives supporting female refugees who have partial secondary or interrupted education to have access higher education are important.

Research

- **Collect census-style data of registered refugees**

Large-scale quantitative surveys of refugees are needed in order to gain a better understanding of the numbers of university-eligible refugees living in various settings, including dispersed urban refugees and those based in camps. Watenaugh et al. (2013) found that misconceptions about the

background of refugees at Za'atari camp in Jordan led to stakeholders believing that the camp lacked qualified university-aged refugees. Census-style surveys would allow policy-makers to understand the proportions of youth eligible to access higher education and to understand the scale of programming required in order to meet their needs.

- **Conduct mixed-methods studies**

Mixed methods studies are needed to understand the data (enrolment numbers, gender representation) and the experiences behind the numbers. Only through interviews and open-ended question surveys of refugee students, with faculty, and with staff, can the impact of initiatives and on-going challenges be identified. Quantitative data tells only part of the story.

- **Support refugee-led studies**

Refugees are the experts of their experiences. Refugees already in or entering tertiary education should be encouraged to continue their studies at the graduate levels and study refugees' integration and pathways into higher education. UNHCR already co-designs research projects with the refugee community; these could be expanded.

- **Conduct studies on blended learning and innovative methods**

As innovative methods of blended learning and technology-driven higher education for refugees increase, there should be focussed studies on their impact. In particular, longitudinal studies would allow us to understand the benefits and, perhaps, unintended consequences for refugees and host and home societies. This is the only way to make necessary improvements for efficacy.

CONCLUSION

Despite the benefits and support of international conventions, barriers to higher education for refugees persist. However, promising initiatives continue to be developed. Strong and equitable policy and legislation, sound research and sustainable funding for effective programmes are all important to address the issue. It is also important that even with the many humanitarian needs of refugees, higher education also be considered a priority area. Higher education must be part of a holistic humanitarian response strategy - not only for its protective, social and economic benefits - but also for the hope and future opportunities it offers those who have lost so much.

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