STATE OF PLAY

PATHWAYS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE YOUTH

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WUSC EUMC

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WORLD UNIVERSITY SERVICE OF CANADA

Since 1978, our Student Refugee Program (SRP) have resettled over 1,700 refugees from 37 countries of asylum.

Photo: Lorenzo Moscia, Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

WUSC is a Canada-based global development organization working to create a better world for all young people. Present in more than 25 countries around the world, our interventions focus on education, economic opportunities, and empowerment. Over 1,000 students, representing more than 80 university, college, and CEGEP campuses across Canada, directly support our efforts through student-led and campus-based WUSC Local Committees.

WUSC has been improving access to higher education for refugee and displaced youth for over seven decades. Since 1978, WUSC's innovative Student Refugee Program (SRP), has leveraged support from student groups on post-secondary campuses across Canada to provide long-term resettlement and higher education for refugee youth. Our network of students support approximately 130 refugees each year through this program. Together, they have resettled over 1,700 refugees from 37 countries of asylum since the program first began. Complementing this initiative, WUSC also works to improve access to quality primary and secondary education for girls in Kenyan refugee camps to support the pipeline of higher-education ready graduates.

WUSC is uniquely positioned to undertake an assessment of higher education for refugees given our post-secondary education networks, scholarship delivery expertise, work with refugee students in higher education, and robust in-camp programmatic expertise.

Although the SRP provides durable solutions to displaced individuals, these efforts alone insufficiently address the scale of the global refugee crisis and the lack of educational opportunities available to refugees. This report is intended to provide a snapshot of where this emerging field is situated; but more importantly, highlight some of the critical issues that stakeholders will face as we collectively move forward to expand the provision of higher education to refugees.

This report is informed by WUSC's experience and expertise improving access to quality education for displaced youth. It is also informed by discussions at the Second Annual WUSC Roundtable on Higher Education for Refugee Youth. This roundtable brought together numerous actors in the field, including academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and donors who are innovating in this field.

SETTING THE SCENE

THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE

By the end of 2016, the global displacement crisis reached unprecedented proportions. An estimated 65.6 million individuals, or one in every 113 people, are now displaced; either an asylum-seeker, internally displaced, or a refugee[1].

In many regions, instability is lasting longer, and "reignited situations," such as the conflict in South Sudan, are occurring with greater frequency. The length of displacement has also increased, with the average displaced person now experiencing 26 years of uncertainty and instability as refugees or displaced persons[2]. Recognizing the increasingly protracted nature of this global crisis, support for displaced persons must extend beyond meeting immediate needs, such as food and shelter, to include education, employment, and empowerment opportunities.

A study from the Refugee Studies Centre in Oxford highlighted that in Uganda, where refugees have the right to work, 21% of refugees run a business that employs at least one other person; of those they employ, 40% are citizens of the host country.

Critically, UNHCR highlights that solutions for displacement have been a "falling trend since the end of the Cold War" (UNHCR, 2015). Resettlement and alternative pathways[3] to third countries are available to only a small number of refugees - 1% of the 23 million refugees globally. Less than 5% of the global population return to their countries of origin each year through voluntary repatriation. UNHCR estimates that 1.1 million refugees have integrated locally into their country of asylum over the past decade. The "status quo" of life as a refugee is the only remaining option for millions of refugees.

The increasingly protracted nature of conflicts also means that for refugees residing in camps, they are often born and raised in these isolated environments. Young people who have been displaced are eager for opportunities to change their circumstances and their lives. Education continues to be the most portable and transformative asset that any young person can have. This is particularly true for young refugees, regardless of whether they are resettled to a third country, integrated into their host country, or return to their country of origin.

"Those of us who are players...need to take the responsibility to support others. The work is hard, but it's satisfying. We need each other in this."

Professor Don Dippo, York University

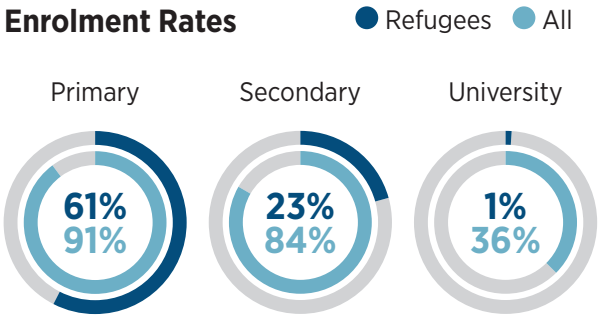
1. UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016.
2. UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015.
3. "[Alternative pathways are] channels of migration not necessarily designed for refugees, but which can be used by refugees, in order to avoid using costly and often dangerous routes through the asylum channels. They complement standard resettlement programmes. These pathways include labour, international study and family migration, as well as humanitarian visas and private sponsorship schemes." (OECD, "Migration Policy Debates," September 2016)

SETTING THE SCENE

THE CASE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education, also known as tertiary education, is an area for investment that can deliver significant social and economic returns in refugee contexts. It is also an area that has received relatively little attention from governments and donors to date.

Enrolment Rates



Source: World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), 2017.

Higher education, whether it is a four-year degree program from a university or it is a certification in a skilled trade from a college, is closely linked to improved employment prospects among graduates and can drive economic development. A skilled and diverse labour force drives innovation and new employment opportunities.

Higher education not only changes the lives of individuals who receive degrees and diplomas, but also the lives of those around them. Improved economic opportunities and incomes for individuals with higher education can support entire families. When there is a critical mass of higher education opportunities, they act as a significant "pull factor" for students in lower grades, encouraging them to stay in school. Each additional year that a young person stays in school increases their chances at leading a healthy life and accessing greater economic opportunities. For women, additional years of education also reduce the likelihood of early marriage and pregnancy, and lead to improved economic and health outcomes for their future families and communities. Underinvestment in higher education also jeopardizes outcomes at the primary and secondary levels. Without investment in higher education, societies will struggle to find individuals with the critical leadership skills necessary for greater socio-political development for entire communities and countries.

For students who are able to access higher education as a pathway to resettlement, these pathways also support improved integration. At post-secondary institutions, resettled students become linked with a diverse community of peers. They gain access to unique academic and emotional support resources (i.e. school-based counseling programs and student groups).

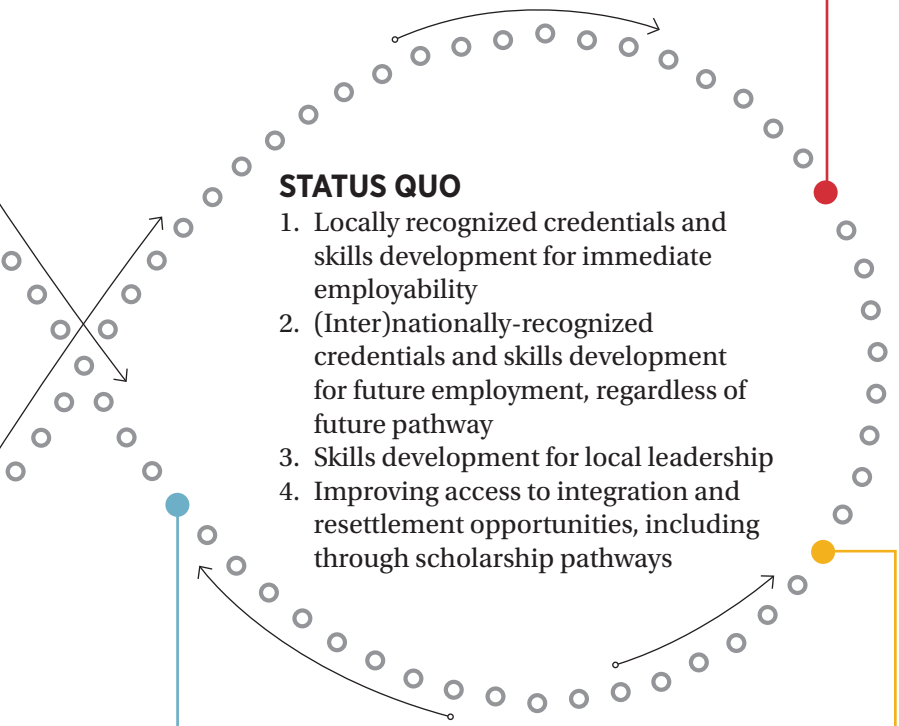
Higher education also supports reconstruction in refugees' countries of origin. Many resettled students make the decision, later in life, to return to their countries of origin to contribute their skills and knowledge to rebuilding efforts, helping to ensure a more inclusive, sustainable, and peaceful process. When young women are granted opportunities to obtain higher education and return to their countries of origin, they contribute to inclusive and more gender equitable reconstruction.

Regardless of the pathway that ultimately becomes available to a refugee, access to higher education can make a meaningful difference.

Despite its value - and the return on investment - the higher education offerings currently accessible to refugees are nowhere near commensurate with the scale of the need. As UNHCR's most recent education report indicates, only 1% of refugees are enrolled in higher education.

HOW HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORTS

DIVERSE PATHWAYS FOR REFUGEES



STATUS QUO

1. Locally recognized credentials and skills development for immediate employability
2. (Inter)nationally-recognized credentials and skills development for future employment, regardless of future pathway
3. Skills development for local leadership
4. Improving access to integration and resettlement opportunities, including through scholarship pathways

RESETTLEMENT

- (inter)nationally-recognized credentials and skills development in camps increases access to employment
- leadership skills development in camps contribute to socio-political and economic development
- legal status gained through resettlement enables student to build upon education received in camp
- gain access to social support network that increases integration success if resettled via higher education pathway
- improved education and employment outcomes in country of resettlement better equips student to provide remittances
- improved education and employment outcomes in country of resettlement better equips student to provide future resettlement opportunities to other family members still living in camps

POSSIBLE PATHWAY

INTEGRATION

- (inter)nationally-recognized credentials and skills development in camps increases access to employment
- leadership skills development contribute to socio-political and economic development
- legal status gained through integration enables student to build upon education received in camp
- gain access to social support network that increases integration success if integrated via higher education pathway
- improved education and employment outcomes better equips student to provide financial support to family members

POSSIBLE PATHWAY

RETURN

- (inter)nationally-recognized credentials and skills development in camps or in third country equip student to contribute to socio-political and economic reconstruction
- international social networks contribute to reconstruction, if higher education is obtained in host or third country

Photo: Lorenzo Moscia, Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

EARLY INNOVATIONS & PILOTS

EXPANDING HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES TO REFUGEE YOUTH

Higher education can create valuable pathways to resettlement for refugees through initiatives such as WUSC's Student Refugee Program. Another part of the solution, however, is to meet refugees where they are in their countries of asylum by leveraging cross-border partnerships, innovative technologies, and complementary expertise of academic institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Higher education delivered to refugees is beneficial to youth at every stage of life, including if they eventually go through a resettlement or integration process.

There are an increasing number of efforts on this front - organizations and initiatives that offer more accessible higher education opportunities relevant to the needs of refugee youth. Canadian post-secondary institutions have been amongst these early implementers. These early efforts have had successes and setbacks, building evidence for many promising practices along the way.

The remainder of this report will introduce and explore these promising practices to chart an ambitious agenda for increasing access to higher education for refugees in countries of asylum through resettlement. The subsequent sections will explore the following questions:

- What do the world's ongoing refugee crises have in common, from an educational perspective, and how can these similarities inform our priorities and next steps?
- What existing promising practices can significantly increase the scale of higher education opportunities being offered?
- How can we ensure relevance and transferability of higher education offerings when there is so much uncertainty?

EARLY INNOVATIONS & PILOTS

INNOVATIVE MODELS

Jigsaw Consult, in partnership with Refugee Support Network, recently conducted a review of higher education options for refugee youth, including blended learning and scholarship opportunities. They reviewed each opportunity from the perspective of accessibility, participation, program structure, incorporation of technology, pedagogical approaches, and the relevance of the program for students' needs.

The survey highlighted some key tensions and trade-offs that are inherent in any program designed to provide access to higher education for refugees. See Table 1 for a summary of the trade-offs.

Jigsaw Consult's landscape review outlines five primary modalities in which higher education for refugees is delivered:

- **Modality A** - programs with a physical presence among refugee populations
- **Modality B** - host community scholarship programs
- **Modality C** - international scholarship programs
- **Modality D** - online learning platforms
- **Modality E** - information sharing platforms

Modality A offers the best chance to reach the greatest number of displaced people with relatively high quality of education at moderate cost.[4] However, the Jigsaw Consult report highlights that less than one quarter of higher education for refugee projects take this approach. Further, the scale of initiatives that employ modality A remains relatively small, with the number of students supported ranging from 15 to 3,200.[5] Of the 11 Modality A programs, four offer bachelor's degrees, while the remainder offer diplomas or certificates.

The Jigsaw Consult report also highlights that Modality A programs tend to have high requirements for technological connectivity (while also offering the greatest degree of support to address barriers to such connectivity). Finally, Modality A programs offer the greatest degree of student support and are generally highly contextualized - but this presents a potential barrier to scaling. There is no question that these Modality A initiatives are promising practices that offer valuable support to refugee students. The question that remains is: How can we increase the scale at which these opportunities are offered?

"The way people learn is changing, and the way universities teach people will have to change as well."

Philip Landon, Universities Canada

4. At lower cost than Modalities B and C, and more costly (but higher quality) than Modalities D and E
5. The initiative that has reached 3,200 students is the Norwegian Refugee Council Distance Learning Project, which is informal and provides no accreditation.

Table 1: Understanding our trade-offs		
Accreditation	Internationally accredited	Nationally certified
Impact	Deep impact for a few (e.g. scholarships)	Broad impact for many (e.g. MOOCs)
Location	Located in regions where there are many higher education-ready students	Located in regions where there are fewer higher education-ready students, but where higher education can have a greater pull-factor among students enrolled at the primary and secondary levels
Relevance	Courses integrated into national systems which may be harder to access but are more transferable should the student secure an alternative pathway to a durable solution	Courses bespoke for refugees which may be more relevant but are less transferable should the student secure an alternative pathway to a durable solution
Relevance	Pre-existing courses that have not been adapted for the local context	Culturally contextualized programs
Relevance	Traditional academic skills that hold more international credibility	Technical or vocational skills that lead to more direct employment linkages
Relevance	Higher education for future context (emerging fields, STEM, and lifelong learning approaches)	Higher education for current context
Admissibility	Standard academic admissions criteria	Special admissions criteria for refugees that reflect incomplete and/or missing transcripts, and barriers to quality education at the primary and secondary levels
Language of instruction	Delivered in English to strengthen communication skills	Delivered in relevant languages for the refugee population to promote accessibility
Costs	Low-cost model with reduced financial sustainability	Full priced, cost-recovery model with greater financial sustainability

Source: Adapted from chart presented by Emily Bowerman (Refugee Support Network)

PROJECT

BORDERLESS HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES (BHER)

Modality
A and D

Established
Implementation began in 2013, but partnerships were developed as early as 2010

Country of Implementation
Kenya (Dadaab and Kakuma Refugee Camps)

Implementing Partners
York University, Moi University, Kenyatta University, Windle International Kenya, University of British Columbia

Individuals Served
Served 206 students (17% female, 78% refugees) since project inception

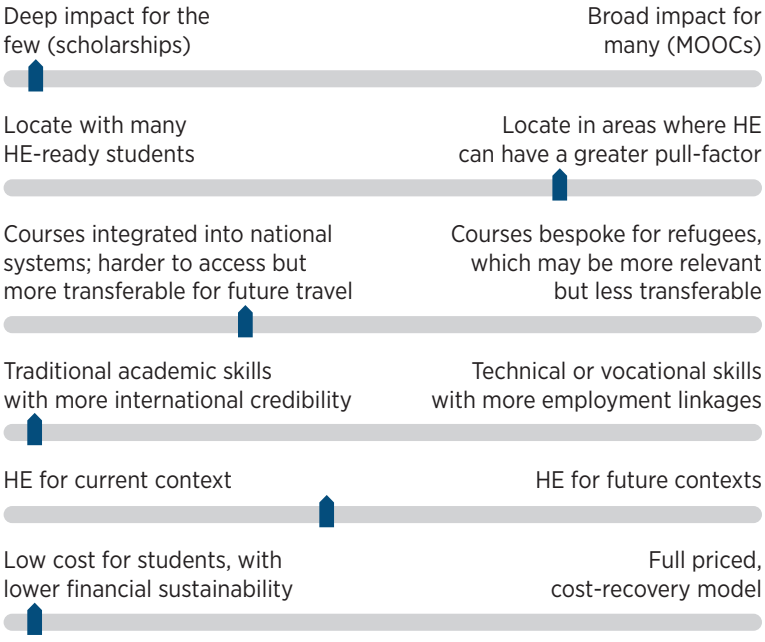
Accessibility
Tuition is free for all BHER courses. Internet and computer access are prerequisites, and students must travel within the camps in order to access computer labs.

Credentials Offered
Internationally accredited two-year diploma in teacher education either in primary or secondary education. This is followed by the opportunity to take a bachelor's degree in community health education, education in science and/or arts, or geography.

Pedagogical Approach
Services are delivered in-camp at a UNHCR-supported computer lab. Modules are delivered online, and teacher aides in the classroom provide support.

Key Trade-offs
The BHER program offers internationally and nationally recognized university-level courses and credentials for students. It presents a relatively high barrier of entry to students, and does not explicitly connect them with employment opportunities, although the courses offered are relevant to employment opportunities in the camp (i.e. incentive teachers). It also provides a high level of in-person/contextualized support and accompaniment for students in the early stages of the program. BHER offers a compelling example of how international universities can engage with host country universities in order to offer relevant content and credentials.

✓ Internationally accredited	✓ Nationally certified
✓ Universal programmes	✗ Culturally contextualized programs
✗ Standard academic criteria	✓ Special criteria for refugees
✓ Delivered in English to strengthen skills	✗ Delivered in local languages to promote accessibility



PROJECT KIRON

Modality
D, moving toward A

Established
2015

Country of Implementation
Jordan and Lebanon

Implementing Partners
Kiron

Individuals Served
2,700 served through online program since inception

Accessibility
Students must have a valid ID card and high school diploma. There is no tuition for the first year of Kiron classes, but full tuition must be paid if students transfer to partner universities. Reliable internet and computer access are prerequisites.

Credentials Offered
Certificates in business and economics or computer science are offered. After one year, students may apply to transfer to a partner universities to complete their degrees through four-year degree programs.

Pedagogical Approach
Students complete competency-based MOOCs online (e.g. through Coursera), setting their own study schedules for completion. The Kiron Direct Academics program is currently in development- it connects volunteer lecturers from universities with Kiron students via Google Hangouts tutorial sessions.

Key Trade-offs
The Kiron program offers the ability to reach a broad number of students with relevant skills, although many of these students may not be the "hardest to reach". Kiron's continuing work to bring mentorship models into the program will offer more opportunities to connect students with employment opportunities. The success of the Kiron program in delivering impact for students will be heavily influenced by the motivation and entrepreneurial attitudes of individual students.

✗ Internationally accredited	✗ Nationally certified
✓ Universal programmes	✗ Culturally contextualized programs
✗ Standard academic criteria	✓ Special criteria for refugees
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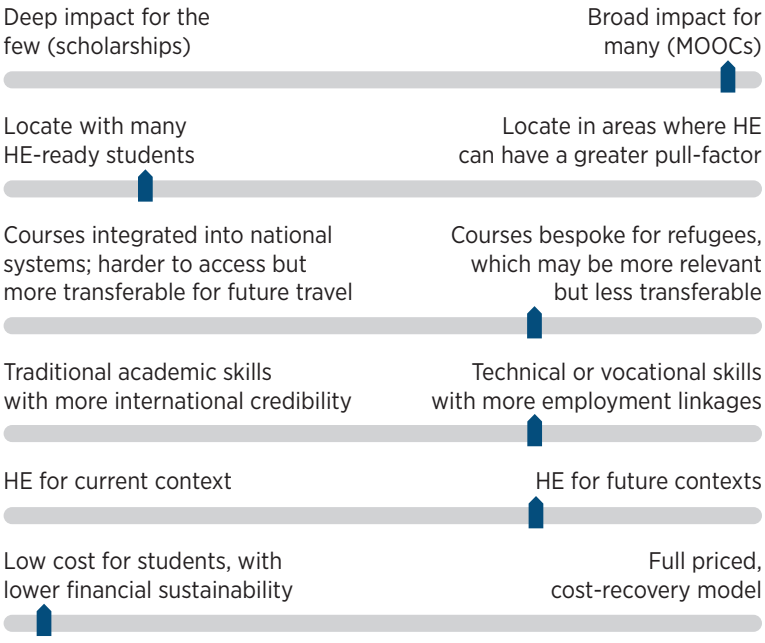


PROJECT KEPLER RWANDA

Modality
A

Established
2013

Country of Implementation
Rwanda

Implementing Partners
Kepler, Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). Kepler is also building a new partnership with Arizona State University to provide additional courses[6].

Individuals Served
25 students annually

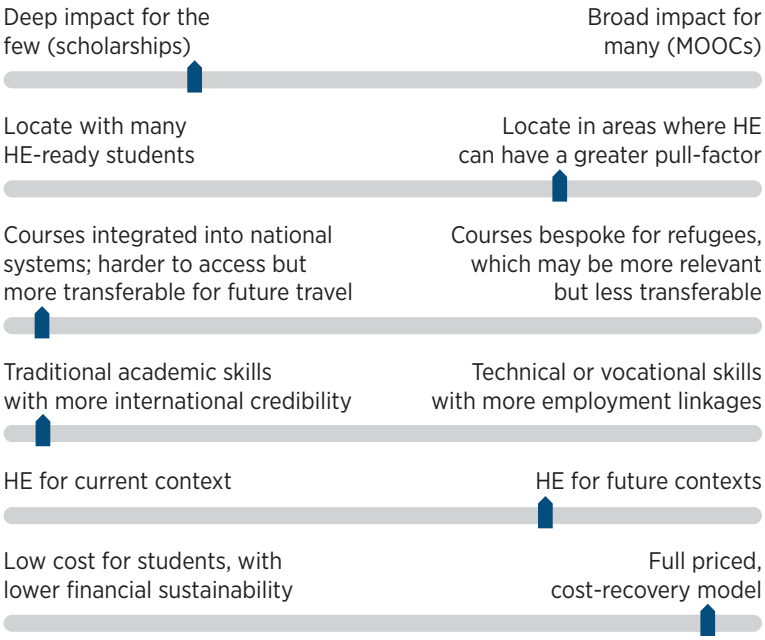
Accessibility
Tuition is USD $1,000 per year for refugee students, although students also have the option to defer a portion of their payment until they obtain employment. In order to mitigate concerns related to travel, especially for women, students are provided with security escorts.

Credentials Offered
Associates degree in communications (business), healthcare management or management from SNHU.

Pedagogical Approach
Services are delivered at a computer lab on the Kepler campus. Online learning is centered around MOOCs provided by other organizations (e.g. Khan Academy), and teacher aides lead discussion seminars. Students advance at their own pace using a competency-based approach.

Key Trade-offs
The Kepler program offers a high-value benefit to students in the form of in-demand skills accredited at a Western institution and a direct connection to employment opportunities. These opportunities may not reach the "hardest to reach" of refugee students, particularly female students, given the cost barriers. Kepler offers connections to relevant internship opportunities, which is critical to for the continued professional growth and livelihoods of students.

✓ Internationally accredited	✗ Nationally certified
✓ Universal programmes	✗ Culturally contextualized programs
✓ Standard academic criteria	✗ Special criteria for refugees
✓ Delivered in English to strengthen skills	✗ Delivered in local languages to promote accessibility



6. https://asunow.asu.edu/20170523-asu-establishes-new-partnership-project-bold

DESPITE THEIR DIFFERENCES, SEVERAL THEMES ARE COMMON ACROSS THESE MODELS.

- **Connectivity is key**
  Improved communications infrastructure and access to appropriate technology, including smartphones, can make a critical difference in the lives of refugees by providing them with information about the available higher education opportunities and allowing them to engage in online courses. The digital learning competencies that an online program can cultivate are vital for today's world. However, these are high-cost investments that are difficult to make available to students.

- **Blended learning is a spectrum**
  On their own, degrees offered through online learning platforms struggle with legitimacy and the transferability of credits. Further, online education alone assumes a level of digital competency, student engagement and self-directed learning that is not always realistic, particularly in refugee contexts. Online learning modules pre-suppose that students come ready to critically and actively engage with learning in a self-directed way, regardless of the predominance of rote learning in most cultures. Approaches that involve some degree of mentorship and group discussion are generally more successful in improving learning outcomes, and promote inter-cultural and team-working skills essential in the global economy.

- **Education has an opportunity cost**
  Higher education offerings must be perceived as valuable enough to overcome the numerous barriers that students face when trying to access services. These include mobility restrictions and safety concerns, especially for women, the cost of courses, and that studies may interfere with work or other responsibilities at home. Higher education must offer value to students and clear prospects for employment or other desired outcomes. The opportunity cost of higher education is especially significant for women, who often face additional social pressure to marry and raise families instead of pursuing higher education and careers.

- **Credentialing is a significant roadblock**
  Although credentials from national institutions in host countries are highly valuable resources in the case of integration, refugees who are resettled may find that their credentials must be re-established in a country of resettlement. The most accessible courses (i.e. in local languages, adapted to local contexts) may unfortunately result in the credentials with the least transferability and international prestige, despite their usefulness.

- **Local partnership ensures improved take-up**
  Working with local partners with local credibility ensure that potential students have access to information about their relevant options, leading to a higher degree of buy-in, trust, and ability to appropriately contextualize courses to meet student needs. Modality A - programs with a physical presence among refugee populations

"Smartphones and data are the resilience plan of refugees."

Raed Sharif, IDRC

UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION CRISES

HISTORICAL INFLUENCE

Moments of crisis have, by necessity, shaped refugee policy. In the aftermath of World War II, global refugee policy was intended to promote autonomy and mobility as European refugees struggled to reunify with displaced families across borders. The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees not only enshrined these rights, but also the right to access education and recognition of prior learning among others.

Post-WWII conflicts gave rise to a very different approach to managing refugee crises: encampment. The aim of encampment was to address large, time intensive refugee displacement so that single-point delivery of essential services could be facilitated. The displacement and expulsion of almost one million Palestinians in 1948 led to the creation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency

Convention on the Status of Refugees, 1951 (article 22)
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.

7. At lower cost than Modalities B and C, and more costly (but higher quality) than Modalities D and E
8. The initiative that has reached 3,200 students is the Norwegian Refugee Council Distance Learning Project, which is informal and provides no accreditation.

(UNRWA) and one of the world's longest lasting multi-site encampment policies. The displacement of 6.3 million Afghan refugees to various camps in Pakistan from the late 1970s onwards further institutionalized this practice. Although encampment remains the default strategy for managing large-scale emergency displacements, the limitations to encampment became readily apparent when emergency displacements transformed into multi-generational displacements. The by-product of encampment -the institutionalization of social and economic segregation from host communities- led UNHCR to develop a series of policies and frameworks to encourage free movement and access to national services, among others. Today, in many crises around the world, the rights of the 1951 Convention are not being fully realized.

Over 80% of refugees currently reside in urban contexts or camps in the global South. Many of host country governments are already overburdened with challenges to national socio-economic development, including the provision of universal secondary education and higher education; enhancing the relevance of education for employment opportunities; and strengthening good governance.

The need for responsibility-sharing among nations is clear, but there has been little political will to implement critical changes that would enable other countries to take on additional burdens; and this includes the provision of higher education opportunities for refugee youth. This is particularly true in the increasingly populist, anti-immigration political climate in the United States, United Kingdom, and in many other countries across Europe, affecting the viability of cooperative global solutions. Despite a challenging political context, approaches to service provision for refugees that reflect the likelihood of protraction, and consequently the need for coherence across humanitarian and development planning, are beginning to have an influence on global thinking.

Experts are recommending that the Global Compact on Refugees[9] (to be finalized in 2018) lays out aspirations for the future of higher education for refugees. The current New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants recommends that all actors consider making available or expanding complementary programs for resettlement, including through the private sector, alternative pathways, and more. Mandating contributions for responsibility sharing remains a contentious issue.

How can we better understand the crises that are currently driving our global refugee response, and how can we develop new approaches to meet them? This section outlines several profiles of ongoing global refugee crises and examines unifying threads that can help inform us in advancing new and effective solutions.

"Higher education provides a powerful driver of change, protects young men and women by offering an opportunity for hope; and supports rebuilding."

Professor James Milner, Carleton University

9. The New York Declaration (signed by 193 countries), gave UNHCR the task of building upon the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which was an Annex to the New York Declaration. UNHCR will develop the Global Compact in consultation with governments and other stakeholders, and the High Commissioner will propose the text in his 2018 annual report to the UN General Assembly. Despite this ongoing work on the Global Compact, the CRRF has already been imperiled by lack of funding. On January 24, 2017, Tanzania announced that they would be withdrawing from their role as a CRRF pilot country.

PROFILES

EMERGING CRISIS

Where
Bangladesh (Rohingya refugees); Tanzania (Burundian refugees)

Key Features
Sudden influx of funding to the host country and substantial challenges in the effective use and coordination of funds; presence of (almost exclusively) humanitarian actors; minimal focus on secondary or post-secondary education needs of refugees; low to minimal host government response or preparation in the education sector, with the majority of refugee needs addressed by multilateral agencies such as UNHCR and UNICEF, and their partners.

Critical Education Needs
Immediate provision of education (formal or informal) to fill the gap, as the length of time a refugee youth is out of school correlates with a lower likelihood of returning to formal education; child protection; construction of critical infrastructure; short-term training courses such as accelerated learning and informational programs generally take precedence over long-term programs.

Political Considerations
Inability or unwillingness of host government to mobilize adequate resources, as the duration of crisis may be unclear; pressure from international community to support immediate protection; negotiations and/or pressure from neighbouring countries of origin for rapid return.

PROTRACTED CRISIS, PARTIALLY INTEGRATED EDUCATION MODEL

Where
Kenya, Lebanon, Jordan, Tanzania (Congolese and Burundian refugees)*

Key Features
Mixed presence of long-term development actors and humanitarian organizations; some host government involvement in monitoring of systems or administration of exams, but there is rarely direct government responsibility for school administration and management; refugee communities have some shared services with host communities (i.e. markets, small businesses, gathering places), but most formal services (i.e. schools, hospitals) are segregated; frequent but unreliable internet connectivity; limited mobility of refugees (particularly women).

Critical Education Needs
Generally, immediate infrastructure demands have been met at the primary levels; there is limited access to secondary school facilities; adequate training for teachers remains a significant challenge, and host government systems for quality assurance (both of teaching and of school management) are not integrated; host country language of instruction is used in classrooms, but there is insufficient support for transitioning children to a new language; host country curriculum is generally being applied, but

realistic opportunities for students to transition into host country education systems are unclear and/or extremely rare.

Political Considerations

Refugee policy is indeterminate and subject to change according to the political landscape; host governments desire to remain in control of major decisions, but are unwilling/unable to provide supportive funding.

*On January 24, 2017, Tanzania announced that they would be withdrawing from the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (an Annex to the New York Declaration), putting a halt to the ongoing efforts to provide Tanzanian citizenship to some Burundian refugees. Tanzania now reports that it will 'discourage new asylum seekers.' The impact of this decision on Tanzania's overall refugee response is yet to be seen.

PROTRACTED CRISIS, FULL INTEGRATION EDUCATION MODEL

Where

Kenya, Lebanon, Jordan, Tanzania (Congolese and Burundian refugees)*

Key Features

Initial strains on systems and a combination of government and humanitarian investments in order to integrate new refugees; greater degree of involvement of multilaterals (particularly UNHCR and UNICEF), both as school managers and as convening bodies for policy change; mixed response from host communities who benefit from funding influx, but may feel resentment.

Critical Education Needs

Intensive support to transition children and youth to new curricula and language of instruction; balanced infrastructure support for host and refugee community schools to ease integration process; teacher training on large classroom management and other essential skills; policy-level reform to ensure that recognition of prior learning from other countries is integrated in the system (particularly for secondary and post-secondary learners).

Political Considerations

host governments receive international praise for refugee hosting and management, but the domestic political impact is unclear. Programming that promotes integration, fosters understanding, and builds bridges between host populations and refugee populations needs to be undertaken in order to prevent policy reversals.

"Responsibility is taken by the few, not the many... just 10 states host 60% of refugees globally."

Professor James Milner, Carleton University

MAPPING THE SYSTEM

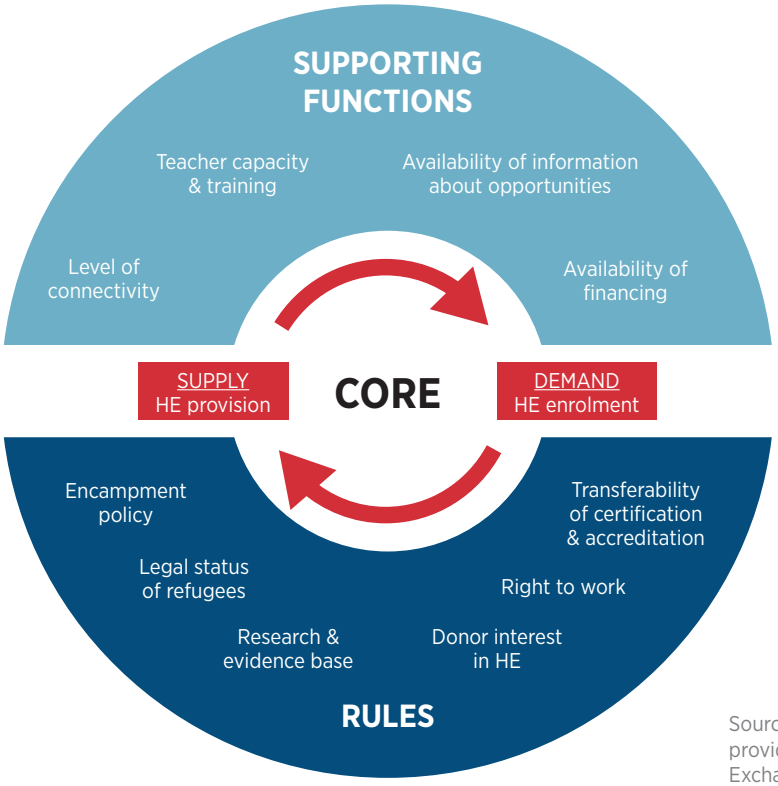
The higher education system is complex, especially when it crosses national borders. The graphic below outlines a few of the key interactions that shape the system that designs, delivers, and regulates higher education for refugees.

At the centre of the puzzle is the supply of higher education and the demand by refugee students to enrol in higher education. There are Supporting Functions (flows of information, the capacity and skills of relevant human actors, and infrastructure) and Rules (social norms, standards, regulations, and laws) that either enable or restrict this core supply-demand function.

The role of actors in the sphere of higher education for refugees is not only to understand the relationships between these functions and rules, but also to selectively intervene at key entry points where they are empowered to enact change. Actors in this space should look for points of entry that offer opportunity, relevance, and feasibility.

- **Opportunity:** Which systems/products are important for refugee youth seeking higher education? Which systems/products address an emerging challenge?
- **Relevance:** Will changes to this system/product, if realized, significantly impact supply or demand of higher education?
- **Feasibility:** To what extent is your organization well positioned to affect change on this issue?

Addressing encampment policies, for example, may represent an area of intervention that is beyond the scope of NGOs and higher education institutions to influence. However, these actors may be well-placed to improve the transferability of certification and accreditation, among others.



Source: adapted from tools provided by the BEAM Exchange (beamexchange.org)

WUSC'S RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPROVING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The most commonly identified request from countries of asylum is for additional financing and support from developed countries in order to address the vast infrastructural challenges that prevent the delivery of high quality education: school construction, connectivity infrastructure, teacher salaries, money for construction and maintenance of refugee camps, etc. Global recognition of and support for countries with an extreme hosting burden might not only alleviate pressure and improve outcomes for refugees, but increased responsibility sharing may also catalyze improvements in national policy towards refugees.

However, the criteria of opportunity, relevance, and feasibility must also be considered. In light of this, we argue that the collective efforts of higher education institutions, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders can make a significant impact in several critical areas related to digital learning, accreditation, relevance, and cost.

WUSC RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING:

1. Organizations should continue to explore models that can be enhanced by connectivity, rather than dependent on connectivity.

Experiences of leading organizations in the sphere of higher education provision for refugees have shown that online-only programs struggle with the trade-off between accreditation and cost. Issues related to transfer of credits (i.e. ensuring that particular courses will be accepted in study programs) may be particularly pronounced with certain Massive Open Online Courses. This issue is significant, and prevents students from benefiting from a higher degree of mobility.

Online-only programs are more accessible in some ways, given that students can work on their own schedules and often at lower cost, but still come up against access barriers including computer access and digital literacy. Exclusively online programs diminish the chances of student success when there are no opportunities for personal support, mentoring, and interaction between teachers and students. Programs should be cautious of exclusively online options, and instead consider how technology can enhance provision of education through, for example, WhatsApp study groups and dissemination of information on higher education opportunities.

2. With support from non-governmental organizations, technical colleges in developed countries should explore partnerships with colleges in host countries to offer nimble, entrepreneurship-oriented skills training and pathways to employment or local incentive work.

The potential of technical colleges to make a difference in the lives of refugees is, as of yet, largely untapped. Drawing on the employment-oriented expertise of technical colleges can offer more choice and options for refugee students who are not interested in or suited to a traditional liberal arts or STEM education. Degree and diploma programs from technical colleges may be more relevant to the employment opportunities available for refugees while still providing students with quality transferable credits and courses.

Private sector collaboration can also be leveraged in this space, and can provide a starting point for sustainability strategies. Organizations like Samasource[10], which outsources data entry and management work to refugees to provide employment opportunities, demonstrate that there is potential for mutually beneficial private sector collaboration, as well as employment opportunities in the global "digital economy." In the field of higher education, where donor funding is already scarce, innovative funding options should be examined.

Collaboration with technical colleges to enhance employable skills amongst refugee populations would further increase value in host countries where there is already momentum toward integration. However, pilot initiatives with technical colleges could demonstrate value and "make the case" for increased and more effective integration, with sufficient evaluation.

3. In order to bring higher education to refugees where they are, we need to think of easy-to-replicate models as opposed to scaling individual projects.

In the section on "Mapping the System," this report outlines that national refugee policy, curricula, and language of instruction impose very real constraints on how much any individual program can be scaled-up. While non-governmental organizations, colleges, and universities should continue to actively explore opportunities to expand their existing offerings in the space of higher education for refugees, we must also recognize that crossing national boundaries with educational offerings will naturally raise issues that cannot necessarily be overcome by a single institution, or even a consortium of institutions.

Instead, let us collectively think beyond scaling-up our individual projects and look at how we can craft interventions that lend themselves to easy replication. We can consider options such as:

- Ensuring that all curricula and materials are open-source and easy to share, and supporting/improving those materials that do already exist;
- Integrating financial resources in our project budgets that support collective goals. For example, a group of organizations in Kakuma Refugee Camp (including WUSC) is jointly funding expanded internet connectivity, which will benefit all students in the camp regardless of affiliation with specific projects; and
- Ensuring that project design is complementary to existing initiatives in the same location.

In all the work that practitioners in this space collectively embark on, one of our core aims must be to build best practice and evidence that can increase support and expand offerings of quality higher education for refugee youth.

10. https://www.samasource.org

4. Practitioners and academics should strengthen their collective advocacy for higher education as a whole, drawing on practitioner-informed, peer-reviewed evidence for products about refugee higher education.

An integral part of ensuring the sustainability and the viability of collective work on refugee education is to support it with coordinated evidence-gathering and advocacy work to established as well as emerging donors.

Researchers and practitioners have both identified a strong need for research products that are perceived as valid (i.e. peer-reviewed), but are also accessible and timely. In order to demonstrate value, donors require quantitative business case data, but this need must be balanced with practitioner interest in nuanced, qualitative data about how students' lives are impacted.

How can we balance these considerations or more effectively integrate multiple types of research? A hybrid peer review committee, composed of academics and practitioners, could play a critical role in ensuring quality and utilization of evidence being produced. This approach has been piloted by an American group called Community Campus Partnerships for Health, which has developed a partnered peer review process and a toolkit for engaged scholars[11].

A strong evidence base is necessary to understand what is working and what has the potential to be replicated. An evidence-base is also crucial in order to advocate for increased funding for the higher education for refugees sector as a whole. This evidence base cannot only be a repository of information about ongoing programs (although this is a necessary first step), but must better reflect how higher education initiatives are delivering on employment and empowerment outcomes for refugee youth.

CONCLUSION

In many ways, higher education provision for refugees is still in its infancy as a sector. As we move forward and pursue improved evidence and increased growth, we need to understand the diverse pathways available to refugees and the trade-offs throughout the life cycle of programming. Early on in our programs, we tend to reply on more localized, bespoke initiatives that service small populations, providing deep impact for a few students at high cost. As programming matures, we move into new stages of trade-offs, becoming increasingly concerned with the ability of degrees to deliver relevant impact for students and to expand access at low cost.

In the current political climate of populism and instability, it is more important than ever to defend the right to education for vulnerable young men and women. The untapped potential of this generation of refugee youth can transform our global community. With dedication, a strong commitment to collaboration, and investment in evidence-gathering and advocacy, we can continue to realize this vision.

11. https://ccph.memberclicks.net/ces-toolkit

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