

THE
OTHER

1%

REFUGEES AT
INSTITUTIONS FOR
HIGHER EDUCATION
WORLDWIDE

CONFERENCE REPORT

18TH – 19TH JUNE 2019
BERLIN



Federal Foreign Office

DAAD

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service





CONFERENCE REPORT

The Other 1 Percent – Refugees at Higher Education Institutions Worldwide

This is the summary report of the international expert conference on refugees in higher education. The conference took place in Berlin on 18–19 June 2019 on the occasion of World Refugee Day. The conference was organized by the German Federal Foreign Office (FFO), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This report describes the content of the individual sessions of the conference. It highlights the key messages and recommendations raised by speakers and participants. The report includes links to various partner websites. The report refers to the conference website www.theother1percent.de where you can find material that complements this report, including the attendance list, the speakers' booklet, the full text of the keynote addresses, the marketplace posters, photos of the conference, concept notes and information about the student delegation.

Numbers and data presented in the report were provided by the panellists and presenters at the conference. Where possible we verified the data with sources. However, the authors of this report cannot vouch for the data nor the facts and opinions provided by the panellists and presenters.

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CONTEXT

We are discussing education and leadership. My education and leadership journey was inspired by refugees. I was in a school run by French speaking refugees in an English-speaking country, Kenya. I managed to qualify to study with a DAFI scholarship and go to Canada to participate in a cancer research project. This changed my mindset on what is possible.

Bahati Ernestine Hategekimana, DAFI scholar

On **World Refugee Day 2019**, the German Federal Foreign Office, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) co-convened an international conference¹ of experts on refugees in higher education. It reflects a shared vision to **help refugee youth realize opportunities for self-reliance** for themselves and their communities. The 2018 Global Compact on Refugees and the upcoming Global Refugee Forum informed the framework for the discussions at the conference ([see textbox 1](#)).

Two-thirds of the **20.4 million persons protected under UNHCR's mandate** are now displaced for a period of time that represents at least one cycle of education. **Children and young people make up more than half the world's refugee population.**² While 92 per cent of non-refugee children worldwide have access to primary school, only 61 per cent of refugee children do. At secondary level, 84 per cent of youth are enrolled in secondary school while this is the case for 23 per cent of refugee youth.³

When it comes to tertiary education, just one per cent of young refugee women and men have access to higher education while enrolment among non-refugees is 37 per cent. Refugees face many obstacles to accessing and completing higher education. These include costs, language barriers, lack of documentation or acceptance of prior learning achievements, lack of information for how to access higher education, restricted access to certain study programmes or competing demands to earn money. This situation prevails even though it is widely acknowledged that **obtaining certification, such as a diploma or degree, is a monumental step towards self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods** for refugee students and their families.

¹ Please see the [Conference Programme](#) for more details.

² UNHCR. 2019. [Figures at a Glance](#)

³ UNHCR. 2018. [Turn the Tide. Refugee Education in Crisis](#)

In such conditions, humanitarian responses alone are insufficient to support host countries to fulfil their responsibilities to ensure access to quality education for all. To address this gap, the **sustained, coordinated effort of all humanitarian, development and national stakeholders is urgently needed**. “The Other 1 Percent” conference provided **a platform to identify opportunities and existing efforts to bring this conversation forward**.¹ At the conference UNHCR introduced its goal to expand access to tertiary education to 15 per cent of the world’s young refugees by the year 2030 (#15by30). The upcoming Global Refugee Forum is a **framework for achieving this collectively**.

About 300 experts, students (including refugee students), representatives from governments, donor organizations, NGOs, and universities attended the conference.² The conference provided an **opportunity to learn from each other** by bringing together, for example, politicians, universities and students from a range of places such as Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Turkey, Iraq, Kenya or Uganda. Although each refugee situation is different the challenges and opportunities are similar.

The conference participants reaffirmed that (1) **access to higher education is a right**, (2) refugees need to be included systematically to develop their full potential to benefit their community and the hosting society, and (3) their insights, skills, motivation and connection with the refugee community are indispensable for achieving global education and development goals. The conference concluded that based on existing expertise, evidence and individual stories higher education for refugees can be expanded. It will require dedication to forging strategic **partnerships**, building the **evidence** base of sustainable solutions and self-reliance for refugees in higher education and developing innovative approaches to **programme design and funding**.

Textbox 1: Global Compact on Refugees and Global Refugee Forum

The Global Compact on Refugees is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing among the international community. It recognizes that sustainable solutions to refugee situations cannot be achieved without effective international cooperation and provides a blueprint to ensure that communities hosting refugees get the support they need to thrive alongside the refugee population. The compact underscores that refugees must have access to opportunities and perspectives, such as higher education and economic integration, so they can lead productive, self-reliant lives.

The first Global Refugee Forum will take place on 17 and 18 December 2019. It will turn the commitments of the Global Compact into measurable, action-oriented contributions in the following areas: burden and responsibility-sharing, education, jobs

and livelihoods, energy and infrastructure, solutions and protection capacity. The Global Refugee Forum will be co-hosted by UNHCR and Switzerland, and co-convened by Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Germany, Pakistan and Turkey. They will be involved in mobilizing broad political support for the Forum. The Forum will take place in 2019, 2023, 2027 and 2030.

- Education will be co-sponsored by a group of different partners to which new partners are welcome anytime.
- Stakeholders, including universities, at all levels supporting the education of refugees are invited to engage in the Forum. Please contact hqeduc@unhcr.org to discuss your ideas and possible contributions.

¹ The Conference Concept Note provides more details and background on the conference context and objectives.
² Please access the participants list online.



HIGHER EDUCATION – THE ROUTE TO SELF-RELIANCE

GIVING YOUNG REFUGEES THE CHANCE TO
FORGE THEIR OWN FUTURES, SUPPORT THEIR
COMMUNITIES AND BLAZE A TRAIL FOR OTHERS

CONFERENCE MESSAGES

1. Providing multi-year, multi-stakeholder investments:

Sources and modalities of higher education funding for refugees should be context-specific, broad and diverse. These sources should include both humanitarian and development sectors, the private and philanthropic sectors and in-kind and innovative financing models. Funding should support strategic and coordinated approaches, alongside inclusive policies based on needs and capacity analysis. These should include scalable and sustainable initiatives, such as Connected Learning, tuition waivers and scholarship programmes. Scholarship programmes should be supported by a diverse group of funding partners to ensure their expansion and sustainability across countries. Ultimately, planning and funding for refugee education must be part of the [SDG 4](#) efforts, since none of the SDG 4 targets can be fully achieved without the inclusion of refugees.

2. Building and strengthening partnerships:

Strategic partnerships are the backbone of education systems that are inclusive of refugees. Partnerships bring together the expertise and capacities to offer, for example, language courses, internship placements, academic support and employment preparation to meet the needs of refugee and host community students. Multi-country scholarship programmes like the DAFI or HOPES programme ([see textbox 2](#)), the DAAD network, the [Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium](#) and [third country scholarships](#) are few examples of effective partnerships in higher education.

3. Sharing responsibility with host countries:

The efforts, experience and investments of host countries in including refugees in national education systems should be recognized. The Global Refugee Forum provides a framework to present and acknowledge [good practices](#). It also offers the opportunity to support host countries to further expand, upgrade and adapt their higher education systems to include more refugee students.

4. Supporting capacity building of higher education institutions:

Higher education institutions play a central role in the integration of refugees in host communities. They generate research to inform migration policy and debate. These institutions also prepare refugees and host community students for a lifetime of learning, leadership and peacebuilding. Higher education institutions are [invited to engage in the Global Refugee Forum](#) to share their expertise, research and integration projects.

5. Investing in secondary education:

Increasing access to higher education starts with improving the quality of teaching, learning and access of boys and girls at secondary school. The prospects of accessing tertiary education can be an important driver for refugee youth to complete their secondary studies. Investments in this area can include scholarships for university, technical education and vocational training (TVET) and Connected Learning, and encouraging interaction between learners in secondary school and refugee university students.

6. Engagement of students and local actors:

Students should participate in the development of higher education and youth programmes. Knowledge of challenges, needs and opportunities of the refugee and host community should also inform education programming of local organizations. Refugee student and refugee scholarship alumni can be a rich source of information about education, internship, and employment opportunities, while offering insight about being a student and sharing their networks.

7. Reaching the host community:

Improving social cohesion should be a primary consideration in expanding higher education programmes for refugees. Understanding the impact on host communities is therefore paramount. In situations and places where resources are scarce and the competition for study places and scholarships are high, universities and scholarship providers must consider communication strategies to explain the protection and support needs of refugees, while also finding ways to support youth in host communities.

8. Improving data exchange and utilization:

Greater investment in research and quality data is needed to inform evidence-based programming that addresses actual needs and to track progress towards the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Sustainable Development Goals. Data-holders, researchers and donors should improve information sharing and broaden communication on higher education for refugees, while ensuring that current data is in the hands of decision-makers. The [Global Academic Network](#) will better link researchers, funders, policy makers, administrators and persons of concern with existing data.

9. Prioritizing language learning:

Language proficiency is a prerequisite for success in higher education and supports social integration, access to rights and services and employment options. Language learning should be prioritized at all stages of higher education programming.

10

Promoting the education of girls and young women:

Girls and women are underrepresented in secondary and higher education due to both structural and social barriers. Higher education policies and programmes should invest in removing barriers and enhancing conditions to facilitate female participation. Examples of interventions can include offering scholarships, recognizing research done by women, hiring more teachers who are women, installing sanitation facilities, ensuring zero tolerance harassment policies, promoting female role models and partaking in gender-focused community consultation and other context-appropriate activities.¹

11.

Improving systems for recognition of qualifications and prior learning:

The [Qualifications Passport for Refugees](#) should be introduced as a universal tool to recognize qualifications held by refugees. This would leverage the impact of the planned adoption of the [Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications](#) in 2019. Increased cooperation within the field of recognition may also contribute to better systems for global recognition of qualifications.

12.

Changing the perception and narrative about refugees:

Efforts must be made to ensure that refugee students are seen as a source of potential rather than a threat or burden. Refugee students, particularly those who studied on a scholarship, have routinely demonstrated an outstanding sense of responsibility and care for their communities. They are ready to exercise values and visions for a peaceful, open and sustainable development by taking on leadership roles. They need support to change the image of refugees from “victims” to “activists” and from “beneficiaries” to “partners.”

13.

Supporting the transition to employment and other post-graduate opportunities:

The prospect for post-graduate opportunities is important for all students in higher education. This is particularly the case when competition for jobs is high and where access to the job market is restricted. Access to comprehensive information on how to navigate employment rights, internships and other professional readiness training will support effective transition to employment. Entrepreneurship and the global digital labour market should be explored for promising alternatives. Alumni networks can also help the exchange of experiences and information.

¹ Further details and recommended action to promote the education of refugee girls and young women can be found in: UNHCR. 2018. [Her Turn. It's Time to Make Refugee Girls' Education a Priority.](#)



BUILDING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS EVERY
BRIGHT MIND TO FIND LOCAL SOLUTIONS FOR
GLOBAL CHALLENGES

LIST OF COLLECTED INTERVENTIONS

IN SUPPORT OF THE INCLUSION OF REFUGEES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

SHARED BY CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

WHAT:

Set up the conditions and procedures to take in refugee students

WHO:

Host governments with higher education institutions, national and international stakeholders

ACTIVITIES:

- Undertake a **needs and capacity analysis** to inform planning and budgeting for short- and longer-term response
 - Perform analysis to **draft inclusive strategies and policies for higher education**
 - Set up **response units** at the Ministry and the higher education institutions to oversee, coordinate and manage the inclusion response
 - Sufficiently resource these units
 - Offer enough **study places for refugees**
 - Work with existing **scholarship programmes to respond to the needs of refugees** and promote increasing the number of scholarships with international and national funding sources
 - Develop procedures for the **authentication of prior education achievements**, including the recognition of certificates and assessments to validate educational level
 - Provide and circulate **rules and guidelines for admission of refugees** to higher education institutions
 - Provide **training and support of teaching staff** and hire additional staff, as necessary
 - Put in place a **focal point for mentoring, guidance and counselling** of refugee students
 - Based on analysis upgrade infrastructure
 - Ensure the availability of teaching and learning materials
 - Set up online **distance learning programmes** and promote them for refugee students
 - Partner with universities that already offer distance learning programmes and recognize their credit system
 - **Create a welcoming and informed environment** so that refugees feel accepted and recognized, for example this can be done through a communication and outreach strategy to students, the teaching staff and the host community
-

WHAT:

Reach out to refugees qualified for higher education

WHO:

Host governments with higher education institutions, national and international stakeholders

ACTIVITIES:

- Disseminate information to refugees through online portals and print material about the registration process, study courses, financing options and scholarships, pre-requisites for different courses, language requirements, recognition of certification and the location of higher education institutions, preparatory or bridging courses
- Meet with the refugee communities
- Provide information to secondary school learners and teachers
- Promote the enrolment of refugee girls in tertiary education programmes

WHAT:

Support those eligible to register and start

WHO:

Focal points for refugee students on campus, peer-to-peer initiatives, NGOs, UNHCR

ACTIVITIES:

- Provide guidance and information to refugees on how to:
 - enrol and complete language and academic preparatory courses
 - find accommodation
 - apply for scholarships or other financing options (e.g student loans)
 - get certificates and documents from home country accredited
 - take part in skills assessments

WHAT:

Support refugee students throughout their studies

WHO:

Higher education institutions, focal points for refugee students on campus, peer-to-peer initiatives, NGOs, UNHCR

ACTIVITIES:

- Ensure refugee students access and complete language courses and academic complementary refresher courses as needed
- Support student-led initiatives and social engagement activities with focus on integrating and supporting refugees and promoting social cohesion
- Ensure quality mentoring, guidance and counselling, including legal and psycho-social support
- Support refugees to find relevant internships
- Guide them to gain additional credits and qualifications through Connected Learning
- Ensure data collection and analysis on higher education includes information on refugee students
- Engage in the public debate on migration, asylum, protection, integration and/or diversity

WHAT:

Prepare refugee students for their post-graduate life

WHO:

Focal points for refugee students on campus, peer-to-peer initiatives, NGOs, UNHCR, refugee alumni networks

ACTIVITIES:

- Provide information about refugee labour rights
 - Offer training on CV and application writing, job interviews and job searching
 - Provide career guidance, initiate job fairs so that students can meet with private and public employers
 - Research digital work opportunities
 - Support the networking with refugee student alumni (online platforms and face-to-face)
-

SUMMARY

DAY 1

Andreas Görgen, Head of the Cultural and Communications Department of the Federal Foreign Office opened the conference. Keynote speeches from Heiko Maas, German Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, then followed. The programme was enriched by music from Aeham Ahmad, a Palestinian-Syrian pianist. The first panel discussed the integration of refugees in higher education institutions in Kenya, Pakistan, Iraq and Germany. The second panel was a discussion between refugee students and a representative from the German Federal Foreign Office. The final panel introduced the opportunities and challenges with regard to the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. The day ended with the official opening of the photo exhibition *The Other 1 Percent*. This exhibition shows the stories of refugee students who study on a DAFI scholarship or in Connected Learning programmes in Kenya, Senegal, Lebanon, Rwanda, Pakistan and Jordan.



Photo: Filippo Grandi,
UN High Commissioner for
Refugees arrives at the
conference and is greeted
by Heiko Maas, the German
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Welcome Address

Heiko Maas

It's ultimately up to us to continue making sure that the Global Compact on Refugees is more than a piece of paper – that it's put into effect and that it improves the lives of refugees. This is our task. I cannot even begin to imagine how many talented young people there are among the remaining 99 per cent,¹ how much potential there is which must be nurtured.

Heiko Maas

¹ In 2017, only one per cent of refugees had access to tertiary education. The title of the conference "The Other 1 Percent" pays attention to those who have managed to access and complete higher education. Source: UNHCR. 2018. [Turn the Tide. Refugee Education in Crisis.](#)



Read the full speech [here](#).

German Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas, set the stage for the two days of the conference by highlighting the need for refugees to be seen not as a threat but as a source of potential. Maas mentioned Albert Einstein, the namesake of the [DAFI scholarship programme](#), as an example of a refugee who fled Germany in 1933. Einstein was welcomed by Princeton University in the United States where he was able to continue his renowned academic career. "Germany should never forget its history," observed Minister Maas. "Many people have fled from Germany and survived because of the support of other countries." Therefore, it remains a priority for Germany to support refugees in Germany and abroad, connecting the past with the present and the future.

Minister Maas highlighted:

- The **importance of engaging with the [Global Compact on Refugees](#)**, reflecting that it must not remain a static document or a piece of paper but must be "filled with life."
- **Germany's continued commitment to the education of young refugees**, acknowledging that the access to higher education should be systematic and not a question of luck or happenstance.
- The **need to broaden the funding base for programmes such as the [DAFI programme](#)**. He invited other States and partners to consider supporting the DAFI programme as well as other equally important programmes, such as those provided by the DAAD, UNHCR and other partners.

Textbox 2: Refugee Scholarship Programmes

DAFI Programme

Since 1992, the [Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative \(DAFI\)](#) has been providing opportunities for young refugees to access higher education in their country of asylum. The sustained support of the German government and private donors has, overtime, allowed the DAFI programme to become the largest and longest running refugee scholarship programme in the world. Expanded contributions between 2015 and 2018 tripled the size of this flagship scholarship programme: in 2018, 6,866 refugee students enrolled in higher education at over 700 universities in 51 countries with a DAFI scholarship. With an impact far beyond the individual refugee student, the DAFI programme serves as a model for expanding refugee access to higher education through other scholarship programmes and innovative initiatives.

HOPES Programme

With a focus on the Middle East and North Africa region, Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians ([HOPES](#)) is a 12 million Euro project funded by the European Union's Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis—the 'Madad Fund'. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the British Council, Campus France and [Nuffic](#) implement the project. The HOPES project aims to improve prospects for refugees and young people in the host communities affected by the influx of Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey and contribute to the post-crisis reconstruction of Syria.



Photo: Filippo Grandi and
Heiko Maas at the opening
of the conference

Keynote Address

Filippo Grandi

Education is an opportunity in itself, it is also the best avenue to self-reliance and perhaps, even more so, to the dignity that people affected by war and by violence are so often deprived of.

Filippo Grandi



Read the full speech [here](#).

The High Commissioner came to Berlin on the occasion of the **World Refugee Day** to speak at the conference and to present [UNHCR's 2018 Global Trends](#).¹ He pointed out that the 2018 displacement figures are not an improvement on previous years. They mirror the **difficulty the world is facing in ending conflict and ensuring peace**. Movements across borders have become increasingly complicated. While issues related to refugees and migrants have become increasingly politicized, the High Commissioner stressed that there is **solidarity with people fleeing** from war, persecution, discrimination and violence. He urged participants to **put education at the centre of responses to displacement situations**, and emphasized that education is immediately connected to the lives of refugee children and youth today and their opportunities, inclusion and independence in the future.

High Commissioner Grandi highlighted:

- The [Global Compact on Refugees](#) and the [Global Refugee Forum](#) are **opportunities to channel solidarity into concrete actions and to strengthen cooperation and partnerships** to respond to forced displacement across the humanitarian and development sector.
- The **investment in education is central to achieving the goals of the Global Compact** because it is the best way to promote self-reliance and dignity.
- **Refugees place a high value on education**, because they understand its value for their children and communities.
- Without the **continued engagement and commitment of partners** such as Germany, Canada, New Zealand and many others, the expansion of education opportunities for refugees will not be possible.
- The **expertise and networks of partners** like the DAAD and Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education ([NOKUT](#)) and programmes such as the DAFI and HOPES scholarship programmes ([see textbox 2](#)) are necessary to expand access to tertiary education.

Photo. Participants discuss during the coffee break



¹ UNHCR publishes the [Global Trends](#) each year to provide official statistics and analysis concerning forced displacement across the globe.



Photo. (From left to right)
 Dr Amanj Saeed, Foni Joyce
 Vuni, Dr Anan Alsheikh Haidar,
 Dr Jan Claudius Völkel
 (Moderator), Muhammed
 Shikhani, Prof. Dr. John K.
 Chang'ach, Hina Shikhani,
 Prof Dr Bernd Huber

Inclusion of refugee students in Pakistan, Kenya, Iraq and Germany

Panel Discussion

Peace and education go hand in hand and allow you to fully engage and contribute to development.

Foni Joyce Vuni, DAFI alumna

The panel discussed experiences of refugee students and university staff with the integration of refugees into higher education institutions in Pakistan, Kenya, Iraq and Germany. The obstacles refugee students encounter when joining a new academic environment vary from context to context. The panellists discussed aspects of **creating equal opportunities** for young refugee women and men, with a specific emphasis on the **importance of language proficiency**.

→ **The label “refugee” can prevent displaced youth and host community from seeing refugees’ potential:** Foni Joyce Vuni, DAFI alumna, co-chair of UNHCR’s Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC) and co-founder of the community-based YEMI initiative living in Kenya, elaborated on the boundaries the label “refugee” inflicts on people in terms of pursuing higher education and leveraging their potential. In addition to being faced with challenges such as lack of proper documentation and high tuition fees, the refugee label has negative connotations, people do not expect refugees, especially young women, to academically excel. Foni herself rose above these limitations to change this common narrative.

→ **As a refugee and as a young woman you need to perform above average.**

Hina Shikhani, a DAFI scholar from Afghanistan studying in Pakistan said that being a girl drove her to perform above average. She now promotes the education of girls and fights to overcome the restrictions of social limitations posed on refugees and girls. "Educating a woman is equal to educating a generation," she said. "It is the greatest asset for a society. They will be the future mothers, they will support their children, their family and their community." She noted that the discrimination of refugees became visible, for example, in the limited number of study places available to them and in the lack of understanding of the lives of refugees and their ambition and potential.

→ **Being accepted and being able to work and create meaning in life is essential.**

Dr Anan Alsheikh Haidar is a Syrian legal scholar at the University of Cologne. She studied in Syria before doing her doctorate in the UK. She returned to Syria but then came to Germany as a refugee in 2014. When she joined the University of Cologne as post-doc legal scholar on a [Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation](#) it was important for her that her colleagues understood her situation. The university was an important place for her to feel comfortable and for her skills being recognized. Dr Haidar explained that the University of Cologne offers intensive language courses for refugees as well as a mentorship programme to help refugees in various areas of personal and academic life.

Photo. (From left to right)

Dr Amanj Saeed, Foni Joyce

Vuni; Dr Anan Alsheikh Haidar



- **Proficiency in the language of instruction is crucial:** Prof Bernd Huber, President of the Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, said that there are differences between refugee academics and refugee students in terms of their integration into a university setting. He said that refugee students do not have a different status than any other international students. However, acknowledging their specific needs support and services are offered to them at the university such as language courses and counselling. The university has invested a lot of resources in the provision of language training. "Language proficiency is crucial," he said. "There is no way around it." Prof Huber explained that language is also a reason why the number of refugee students in Germany was still relatively low.
- **Refugee children integrated in the education system of the host country have fewer language problems:** Prof Dr John K. Chang'ach, Dean of the School of Education at the Moi University in Kenya, explained that those refugees educated in Kenyan schools had fewer language problems with regard to higher education, only those who completed their education elsewhere. In the [Dadaab refugee camp](#), a diploma certificate programme for teachers is offered as part of the inclusion of refugees in the national education system. A new Community Health Bachelor programme was recently launched in the Dadaab camp because of the need for trained staff to respond to health-related issues. In all the education programmes offered the local host community is included to avoid hostility.
- **Knowing the language of the host country helps build social and professional networks:** Muhammed Shikhani, PhD student and Leadership for Syria alumnus, studied in Germany a programme that was taught in English which helped him progress quickly. The Leadership for Syria programme¹ gave Mr Shikhani and the other scholars a four month German language course. It was essential for him to know German, for example, to create networks and apply for PhD opportunities.
- **Flexible regulations and partnerships are key elements of an inclusion strategy:** Dr Saeed, Advisor to the Minister of Higher Education of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, explained the regional strategy to enrol eligible refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in higher education. This included the provision of information about university admission procedures, enrolment requirements and available courses of study. Ongoing challenges are language barriers and the authentication of prior education. New regulations were developed for the enrolment of Syrian refugees, including the opportunity for a **temporary registration with the universities** and commencement of their studies until they were able to present the required certificates. Dr Saeed noted the **importance of including refugees in finding solutions to their own problems**. He pointed out the **importance of partnerships** with different stakeholders and programmes like the DAFI and HOPES scholarship programme. One challenge is to offer more refugee students the chance to pursue graduate and postgraduate study opportunities through sponsorships and scholarships.

¹ In 2014, the Leadership for Syria scholarship programme was launched in Germany. It aimed at supporting young people from Syria who had to drop out of their master and doctoral studies. It was implemented by the DAAD and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office and the Ministry of Science in North Rhine-Westphalia. The programme ended in 2018 having supported 221 fellows. It provided a four-month language course prior to starting their studies and a complementary socio-political learning programme at the University of Konstanz.



Photo: (From left to right)
Jackson Habimfura, Bahati
Ernestine Hategekimana,
Heidrun Tempel, Muhammed
Shikhani

Students discuss with a high-level representative of the Foreign Office

Panel Discussion

This scholarship turned me from a survivor, looking to survive day to day on minimum wages, into an educated person. It gave me the empowerment that I needed.

Muhammed Shikhani, PhD Candidate and Leadership for Syria alumnus

This session put three refugee students from Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Syria on stage with Ms Heidrun Tempel, Director for Research and Academic Relations Policy and Cultural Relations Policy at the German Federal Foreign Office. The students took this opportunity to ask Ms Tempel questions about making **investments in higher education for refugees** and demonstrating their personal stake in higher education. They also discussed their observation that the success of refugee students depends on a joint commitment of their professors, NGOs, institutions, donors, families and communities.

Bahati Ernestine Hategekimana, DAFI scholar in Kenya and of Rwandan origin, asked Ms Tempel what the government of Germany has planned to **expand partnerships, funding and resources**, and to bring other State partners to the effort to achieve #15by30.

Ms Tempel reaffirmed Germany's support for UNHCR and for the DAFI scholarship programme. She made the important link between peacemaking and education, suggesting, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, that **humanitarian and development partners must both provide financing to support refugee education** and to share burden with the host governments. Ms Tempel underlined the importance of programmes such as the DAFI programme. She said that the students in the programme have demonstrated their potential and motivation to build up NGOs, neighbourhood and community initiatives and work in governments.

The students asked what donors like Germany who supported their education expected from them in terms of their leadership. Ms Tempel emphasized that **refugee students are role models**. Experience shows that refugee students are willing and motivated to give back to their community through projects and social engagement, particularly with regard to encouraging younger refugees to follow their lead. Ms Tempel suggested to establish **networks of refugee students and alumni** in order to create synergies, exchange ideas and encourage social initiatives.



Photo: (From left to right)
Daniel Endres, Shona Bezanson,
Dr Jan Claudius Völkel
(Moderator), Thomas Zahneisen,
Mulu Solomon Bezuneh,
Stéphane Dion

Global Compact on Refugees and its implications for higher education and self-reliance for refugees

Panel Discussion

There is not one person that cannot contribute to this goal of bringing 15 per cent of refugees into higher education by 2030.

Daniel Endres, Director of the Global Refugee Forum at UNHCR

Initiated by host governments, donor countries, universities, private partners, non-governmental and UN organizations, efforts such as the DAFI and HOPES programme ([see textbox 2](#)), the inclusion of refugees in national education systems and Connected Learning opportunities have contributed to increasing the number of refugees in higher education. In each of these efforts, **responsibility sharing with hosting countries is a priority and inclusion of refugees in national education systems** a central feature.

The panel exchanged views on opportunities to expand quality higher education for refugees through the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees with a specific focus on inclusion, partnerships, funding opportunities, national policies and self-reliance.

→ **Including refugees in national education systems enables them to build sustainable futures for themselves.** Daniel Endres, Director of the Global Refugee Forum at UNHCR, explained that the priority of UNHCR's work and that of its partners was to **find solutions for refugees**. He pointed out that **education is a pivot**. It is necessary for refugees to integrate and be self-reliant in the country of asylum. And it enables refugees to help rebuilding their home countries if they decide to return. Mr Endres acknowledged Turkey's effort to include **refugees in its higher education system**. **He emphasized that the inclusion in national systems was the most cost-effective way of providing higher education to a large number of refugees.** The DAFI programme, DAAD programmes and [third country scholarship](#) models (for example [WUSC's Student Refugee Programme](#), Leadership for Syria and [Japan](#)) were also important to expand access and solutions.

- **Refugee inclusion efforts need coordinated national and international commitments:** Mulu Solomon Bezuneh, Ambassador of Ethiopia in Germany, said that with over 900,000 refugees, Ethiopia has the second largest refugee population in all of Africa.¹ **Ethiopia offers a positive example of how countries can embrace refugees.**² Through its legal framework, it has enabled refugees to participate without discrimination in national systems including education, health and labour. Ms Bezuneh explained that the inclusion policy is based on the belief of **equal right and opportunity**, even if this **requires tremendous political and financial effort**. One of the challenges Ethiopia faces is that it is largely **dependent on international assistance** to fund its response to the needs of refugees. The [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework](#) and the Global Refugee Forum provide important frameworks to coordinate national and international efforts to benefit both refugees and their host community.
- **Coordination will help to achieve better results:** Stéphane Dion, Ambassador of Canada in Germany, listed two main difficulties on the road to #15by30. First, most refugees are hosted by low and middle income countries constrained to provide sustainable education of good quality for their own population. And second, the situation of refugees varies widely within and across countries, as do their needs. Canada focusses its support at three levels: First, Canada supports the **development of the education systems of host countries**. Second, it provides education programmes and services, including teacher training for refugees and higher education programmes in refugee camps (both face-to-face and online). Third, **it supports young refugees that come to Canada** through the [Student Refugee Programme](#), a third country scholarship programme.
- **Partnerships are essential, and first and foremost with young people:** Shona Bezanson, Associate Director of the Scholars Programme at Mastercard Foundation provided insight in the foundation's work in Africa. It is centred on a great number of partnerships including with governments, CSOs, academic institutions and young people to find **solutions for the youth unemployment challenge**. Some of its partners include the [African Leadership Academy](#) and American University of Beirut that follow **student centred approaches**. The scholars programme supports disadvantaged youth to pursue secondary and tertiary education. To date, the foundation has not explicitly focused on displaced youth, but even so, 10 per cent of the 35,000 scholarship recipients have experience with displacement. The programme plans to add 15,000 scholarships over the next three years for undergraduate and master degree studies with the focus on **allocating a quarter of these to displaced youth**.
- **Treating refugees not as caseloads, but as part of society and responding to refugee situations with more comprehensive approaches. That is what is urgently needed.** In today's world, humanitarian needs are ever increasing and in 2019 not even half of the funding needed for humanitarian responses has been made available. Responding to refugee situations solely with humanitarian assistance is not sufficient, especially when it comes to higher education. Mr Zahneisen highlighted that not enough priority is given to **consulting with the affected populations to find local solutions**. The adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees is a great achievement and it provides opportunities for sustainable solutions for protracted refugee situations. The inclusion of refugee children and youth in national education systems is a great example of more **comprehensive approaches to refugee situations that contribute to refugee self-reliance and resilience and benefit both, refugee and host community children and youth** if invested systematically in the national education system.

1 To learn more about the refugee situation in Ethiopia, please visit [UNHCR's Ethiopia Data Portal](#).

2 UNHCR. 2017. [Working towards inclusion – Refugees within the national systems of Ethiopia](#).

AT A GLANCE: ACHIEVING #15BY30 TOGETHER

1%

Refugees face numerous challenges on their education journey – from language barriers to costs, lack of information and to missing certificates. The benefits of higher education for self-reliance and civil engagement are generally known. **Yet, only 1% of refugee youth access higher education.**

Global Compact on Refugees 2018

"In line with national education laws, policies and planning, and in support of host countries, States and relevant stakeholders **will contribute resources and expertise to expand and enhance the quality and inclusiveness of national education systems** to facilitate access by refugee and host community (...) youth to primary, secondary and **tertiary education.**"

1% TO 15%

Given the array of options through which access to tertiary education can be expanded – including investments in TVET, connected and traditional degree and diploma programmes, third country scholarships, education pathways and national inclusion—along with the continued engagement and commitment of partners and host countries, increasing refugee participation in higher education from one to 15 per cent by 2030 is an ambitious but feasible goal. This will not only benefit refugee students, but contribute to the economic development of host and home countries, self-reliance of refugee communities and social cohesion and peace.



Between July and December 2019, UNHCR facilitates discussions among **education co-sponsors**, including Germany, and supports partners to formulate and submit **pledges, contributions and good practices** on education ahead of the Global Refugee Forum. For more information contact hqeduc@unhcr.org



At the **Global Refugee Forum** on 17 and 18 December 2019, States and other stakeholders will announce concrete pledges and contributions to bring the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees to life. Contributions may take the form of financial, material, and technical assistance.

#15by30 achieved

15 per cent of young refugees access higher education and those with a degree access socio-economic opportunities and thus lead independent lives and engage in the peaceful, sustainable development of their communities.

This is in line with SDG 4 target 4.3 **By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.**



Photo. Filippo Grandi speaks with refugee students at the opening of the exhibition

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

Titled "The Other 1 Percent," the [photography exhibition](#) presents powerful portraits of refugee students and graduates in Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Rwanda, Pakistan and Senegal who belong to the one per cent of young refugees enrolled in higher education.



The students portrayed in this exhibition are just a few of the many women and men who shared their deeply personal stories and experiences with documentary photographer Antoine Tardy. What emerges from the exhibit is a unifying thread of determination, courage and self-belief.

The label 'refugee' conceals the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, ambitions and futures. The exhibition challenges perceptions about refugee students and provides a glimpse into the lives of these strong individuals.

Most of the students portrayed in the exhibition received a scholarship provided through the DAFI programme. Other students study through Connected Learning programmes that enable them to access quality, certified education despite distance or other challenges that make attending university difficult. Participants of each programme exemplify the determination and resolve to succeed despite unfavourable conditions and obstacles.

Since March 2017, the exhibition has been shown in Amman, Copenhagen, Geneva, Islamabad and Berlin. Some of the images are widely reproduced on social media.

The exhibition is available [online](#)

SUMMARY

DAY 2

Christina Gehlsen, Deputy Head of the Division for Science, Research, and Higher Education of the Federal Foreign Office opened the second day of the conference. Her remarks were followed by the welcome address of Professor Wintermantel, President of the DAAD. Professor Julia von Blumenthal, President of the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), then spoke about the responsibility of higher education institutions regarding the inclusion of refugees. Two panel discussions then focussed on student experiences and good practices to overcome barriers to access. Bernd Fischer, Deputy Head of Division European Higher Education Area, Internationalisation at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, then opened the Marketplace. The Marketplace offered a chance for participating organizations to introduce their programmes and projects. In the afternoon the conference participants held in-depth discussions in four workshops and three World Cafés. The conference ended with the summaries of the afternoon sessions and a wrap-up from the moderation team.

Welcome Address

Professor Margret Wintermantel

Education is a crucial component of personal development and participation in society. Access to education, high-quality training and opportunities for lifelong learning is not only a Sustainable Development Goal. For refugees, education is the key to successful integration – on a linguistic, professional and personal level – and a gateway to the labour market.

Professor Wintermantel

Professor Wintermantel, President of the DAAD, said that despite successful programmes such as the DAFI, HOPES and Leadership for Syria and other efforts, more needs to be done to improve access for refugees. Drawing on examples from Germany, she illustrated how successful integration through education can become a reality through **joint efforts by academic institutions, federal agencies, civil society and the affected populations themselves**. She spoke about the role of higher education institutions in improving access for refugees. In Germany, for example, universities have the necessary **intercultural experience and infrastructure to integrate students with a refugee background**. Many universities offer academic **preparatory, welcome, language, integration and mentoring programmes** to support refugees. Professor Wintermantel urged the conference attendees to work together to help refugees access and complete a higher education, specifically **in sub-Saharan Africa**.



Read the full speech [here](#).

Keynote Address

Professor Julia von Blumenthal

Professor von Blumenthal spoke about the role of higher education institutions regarding the integration of refugees. In 2015, Germany had experienced remarkable spontaneous civic engagement, including that of higher education institutions with the arrival of Syrian refugees. To better respond to the influx of refugee students, 100 million Euro were made available for the period 2016 to 2020 by the government. Through this funding, new structures, programmes, coordination mechanisms, and legal protections for refugees in higher education were put in place. International offices at universities have been mainly responsible for this stream of work. She narrowed down four lessons learned from this process: the **importance of preparatory programmes and language learning, continued support over the course of the study, expansion of counselling and organizing peer-to-peer support**.

Professor von Blumenthal recognized the key role universities play to ensure that refugee students, researchers and scholars at-risk receive **equal opportunities** to succeed. She emphasized that higher education institutions must engage in **shaping the public debate** on migration, asylum, protection, integration and diversity. Professor von Blumenthal said that **increased and regular funding, as well as support for higher education institutions in host countries**, is crucial.



Access the presentation [here](#).



Photo. (From left to right)
Virginia Natalia Perez, Dima
Dawood, Felix Sesay, Sadiki
Bamperineza, Ella Ininahazwe,
Almarat Omar, Riwa Al Hamwi

Refugee student experiences in Ecuador, Ghana, Germany, Kenya and Rwanda

Panel Discussion

Refugee student participants offered their reflections and insights into the experiences of refugee students in Ecuador, Ghana, Germany, Kenya and Rwanda. They gave examples of what inspired or enabled them to pursue higher education, challenges that they had to overcome, persons or events that were central to their success, social benefits of their higher education and how they plan to use their education in the future.

Textbox 3 Refugee Student Delegation

Sustainable solutions to refugee education are best developed through cooperation with all stakeholders, including refugee students themselves. Guided by this commitment, one feature of the conference was the participation of students and alumni from DAFI, Connected Learning, HOPES and Leadership for Syria programmes around the world. The students played an active role in the conference. Throughout the

conference they talked about of their experiences, provided commentary at the photo exhibition, and interacted with the other participants. Their diverse backgrounds, experiences and inspiring stories enhanced the richness and depth of the conference for everyone. Read more [here](#).

Good practice examples from Germany, Iraq, Uganda and UNESCO

Presentations

Panel members presented projects on including refugees in higher education in Germany, Iraq, and Uganda, as well as the global initiative to introduce a universal tool to recognize qualifications held by refugees.

Good practice 1: Refugee student support system, Germany

Dr Frauke Drewes is a Project Manager at the University of Applied Science and Art (HAWK) Hildesheim/ Holzminden/ Göttingen. Dr Drewes presented about [HAWK open](#), a support system that helps refugees and international students commence or continue their studies. The programme was launched in 2015 and is funded by the local Ministry for Science and Culture. HAWK open's office is located on the university campus. Dr Drewes presented five components of HAWK open that she sees as essential to the successful integration of refugee learners.

- 1. Holistic support** that responds to refugee students' unique challenges, including counselling, academic preparatory courses, assistance with navigating the institution and academic system, peer student assistants, open office times, computer access, participation in social activities on- and off campus, links to the host community, and training and information about work opportunities.
- 2. The provision of language learning programmes** to support academic success and social integration.
- 3. Individual coaching and mentoring** for international students to encourage utilisation of institutionalised structures of support, rather than navigating complex educational systems in isolation (e.g., academic pre-requisites or waiting periods to enrol in a programme).
- 4. Promote and support a clear system of recognition of qualifications** across all national universities.
- 5. Open communication with host community members to counter misinformation and bias** about refugees and asylum seekers.

Good practice 2:

Refugee education support in MENA countries, Northern Iraq

Professor Hammoudi Rund, Director of International Office und Head of Erasmus Office at the University of Dohuk, in Northern Iraq, presented on the programme [Refugee Education Support in MENA Countries \(RESCUE\)](#). RESCUE is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. It is implemented in Lebanon, Jordan and Northern Iraq. The project's aim is to bolster the capacity and effectiveness of universities to offer refugees access to higher education.

At universities, ad hoc units, such as the **Refugee Student Operational Support (R-SOS) unit**, provide specific services to refugee students to help them start or resume their academic training path.

In 2014, the population of the Dohuk Governorate increased by 50 per cent after the influx of refugees from Syria and IDPs from Mosul. Since the majority of displaced persons had no academic documentation, the University of Dohuk carried out assessment tests, and it admitted 1,000 students. The displaced students and university faced a number of challenges, including the lack of clear rules and guidelines for admission, lack of guidance and support for the new students, lack of support for the psychological needs arising from trauma and language barriers. As a result a large number of students initially admitted dropped out.

The R-SOS unit provided a training for the University of Dohuk staff how to effectively support refugee students. It also aimed at disseminating accurate information about the refugees and IDPs. The [Mediterranean Universities Union \(UNIMED\)](#) project coordinator and the University of Dohuk conducted several visits to refugee settlements and schools, interacting with students, parents and community representatives to inform them about RESCUE and their higher education options.

Professor Rund identified three pivotal elements contributing to the sustainability of the RESCUE project:

- 1. Commitment of the implementing university** to maintain the R-SOS unit to support students and staff.
- 2. Establishment of independent premises for the R-SOS unit**, to create a space to serve refugee and IDP students.
- 3. Collaboration with partner universities** that have staff capable and prepared to disseminate knowledge and skills to colleagues in RESCUE universities about supporting and working with refugees.

Good Practice 3: Refugee Law Project, Uganda

Susan Alupo is the Programme Manager of the [Access to Justice in the Refugee Law Project](#) at Makerere University, in Kampala, Uganda. She explained that in Uganda the right to education for refugees is contained within the Refugee Act. Uganda is the largest refugee hosting country in Africa with nearly 1.3 million refugees.¹ However, the majority of refugees do not have the legal knowledge and financial capacity to effectively present their cases and demand their rights. In terms of refugee inclusion in the Ugandan education system, the Government through the CRRF² Secretariat developed the [Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities](#) (2018–2021). It is based on the [Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan \(2017–2020\)](#). However, access to higher education remains a challenge for many refugees and asylum seekers for a range of reasons, for example, the absence of higher education institutions where most refugees live as well as the lack of recognition of certificates and diplomas. Moving to urban centres to access the universities and getting certificates recognized are often too expensive for a refugee household. Ms Alupo presented four components that are crucial to advance higher education for refugees in Uganda, specifically through partnerships.

1. In the **English for Adults Course**, refugees are empowered through knowledge and skills to speak for themselves. This course was introduced to address the language barrier that is faced by several refugee groups. Accessing higher education programmes at Makerere University, for example, requires the completion of level five English.
2. Through the **Speak Your Rights Course**, refugees are empowered with knowledge and skills to demand and defend their rights. The course helps with the integration process for refugees and allows them to participate in policy discussions through refugee forums.
3. In partnership with the University of Edinburgh and the American University in Beirut the Refugee Law Project received funding from the MasterCard Foundation to support **online distance learning for refugees** in urban areas and through refugee settlements.
4. Refugees who have completed the English course are selected for a **Video Advocacy Skills Training** which creates an opportunity for them to document their own videos to support advocacy or campaigns for different causes.

1 For more information about the refugee situation in Uganda, please go to [Uganda Comprehensive Refugee Response Portal](#).

2 Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

Good Practice 4: Qualifications Passport for Refugees, UNESCO

Fleeing violence and instability is done in haste. Such upheaval means that refugees and IDP's do not always have academic documentation such as diplomas and transcripts of records with them. Even when they can present proof of qualification or credential, systems are often unprepared to recognize those certificates. Equating qualifications, when possible, is often a lengthy and costly process. This can prevent refugees from capitalising on their individual potential, forcing them into unnecessary and unwanted situations of dependency. It also negatively affects the country of asylum where the contribution of qualified learners and workforce cannot be capitalised on.¹

Mr Andreas Snildal, Programme Specialist in the Higher Education Section at UNESCO, presented the [Qualifications Passport for Refugees \(QPR\)](#) which is a promising practice for promoting the recognition of qualifications across borders and national frameworks. Since 2016, the QPR has been implemented in several settings. It serves as a multinational framework to organize and establish a fast-track scheme and evaluate refugees' educational and training background. Through QPR, documents (when available) are analysed and interviews are undertaken by experienced credential evaluators. Participants are then provided with a standardized statement containing information about the highest achieved qualifications of the individual, including job experience and language proficiency. The **Qualifications Passport provides credible and reliable information** relevant in connection with applications for employment, internships, qualification courses and admission to studies. Advantages of this approach include:

- Refugees are equipped with a **standardized document** that can be accepted and easily interpreted in different countries.
- **Long term cost-efficiency** by facilitating and accelerating the process of recognition of undocumented or non-verifiable foreign qualifications across borders in Europe and beyond.
- Helps to **build capacity** in modern recognition methodology in higher education institutions and recognition agencies locally.
- Supports and **strengthens global, regional, national and local initiatives for the inclusion of refugees** into society, education systems and the labour market.

There is potential to make the QPR [a global scheme](#) for forced migrants. Increased cooperation within the field of recognition may in itself contribute to **better systems for global recognition of qualifications**. With a [Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications Project](#) scheduled for adoption in 2019, an introduction of a shared tool to recognize qualifications held by refugees would be timely.

¹ World Education Blog, 20 December 2018.
[A new Qualifications Passport has global potential for recognising refugees' qualifications.](#)



Photo: Bernd Fischer, Deputy Head of Division European Higher Education Area, Internationalisation at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Insights from the German integration experience, Bernd Fischer

Bernd Fischer, Deputy Head of Division European Higher Education Area, Internationalisation at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, presented **statistics to demonstrate the importance of helping refugees to access higher education**.

For example, among the refugees who arrived from Syria since 2015, 43 per cent are between 18 and 34 and about one-third have received admittance to higher education from their home country.

He said the main reasons for prioritizing the **integration of refugees in higher education were**: humanitarian, economic (need for highly skilled workers independent from social assistance), internationalisation of universities, community diversification and intercultural exchange. He pointed out the important role of the **Coordination Unit for Refugee Policy established by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research** (BMBF) in 2015. Integration measures for education included: (a) funding research projects on integration and migration, (b) initiatives to promote basic language and reading skills, (c) assessment of practical skills and access to vocational training, and (d) integration at higher education institutions.

Mr Fischer also listed **policy regulations supporting refugees to access higher education in Germany**, for example: (a) no tuition fees apply for studies at German universities, (b) recognized refugees are eligible for support from the federal student grant programme (BAföG), student loan programmes (Studienkredit) and scholarship programmes of foundations, (c) funding support to Kiron Open Higher Education which offers free online preparatory courses and study programmes, (d) refugees may take up studies or preparatory courses irrespective of their refugee status, and (e) access is solely dependent on pre-qualification and the German language level (usually C1). In Germany, university entry is regulated by the federal states while individual access is ultimately decided upon by the universities.



Read the full speech [here](#).

Bernd Fischer opened the Marketplace for further exchange among participants. The posters presented at the Marketplace are available [online](#).

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WORKSHOPS & WORLD CAFÉS

DAY 2

The workshops and World Café sessions took place in parallel. For each session, a concept note was prepared to offer guidelines for the discussion and inputs from the guest speakers.¹ The breakout sessions provided the opportunity for more in-depth discussions around specific topics concerning refugees in higher education. What follows is a summary of the main messages and takeaways from these discussions. The points described below will offer a basis for the discussions of contributions and good practices as well as collaboration opportunities in the area of higher education in the lead up to the Global Refugee Forum.

¹ The concept notes for each session are available online. The speakers are introduced in the Speakers' Booklet.



Photo. Participants discuss during the workshop 'finance models and strategic partnerships'

Finance models and strategic partnerships

There are many barriers that prevent refugees from accessing higher education, but **cost is generally recognized as one of the most insurmountable**. For many refugees, the steep financial hurdles are experienced both in terms of the **real cost of tuition and fees**, but also in terms of the **lack of right to work, limited livelihoods options**, and also the **opportunity cost of attending school or university** instead of working and contributing to household financial stability.¹

Key Takeaways

- A **large scale multi-year investment driven by a diverse group of stakeholders** such as governments, foundations and private sector firms is needed. This must be coupled with **more cost-effective ways of running scholarship programmes**, since many current approaches are unsustainable and expensive.
- Focus on **scalable and sustainable initiatives**, including [Connected Learning](#), tuition waivers and inclusion in national higher education systems. Support to higher education institutions, funding for higher education sub-sector plans, technical and financial support for certified online learning programmes or strengthening national TVET systems will also be impactful.

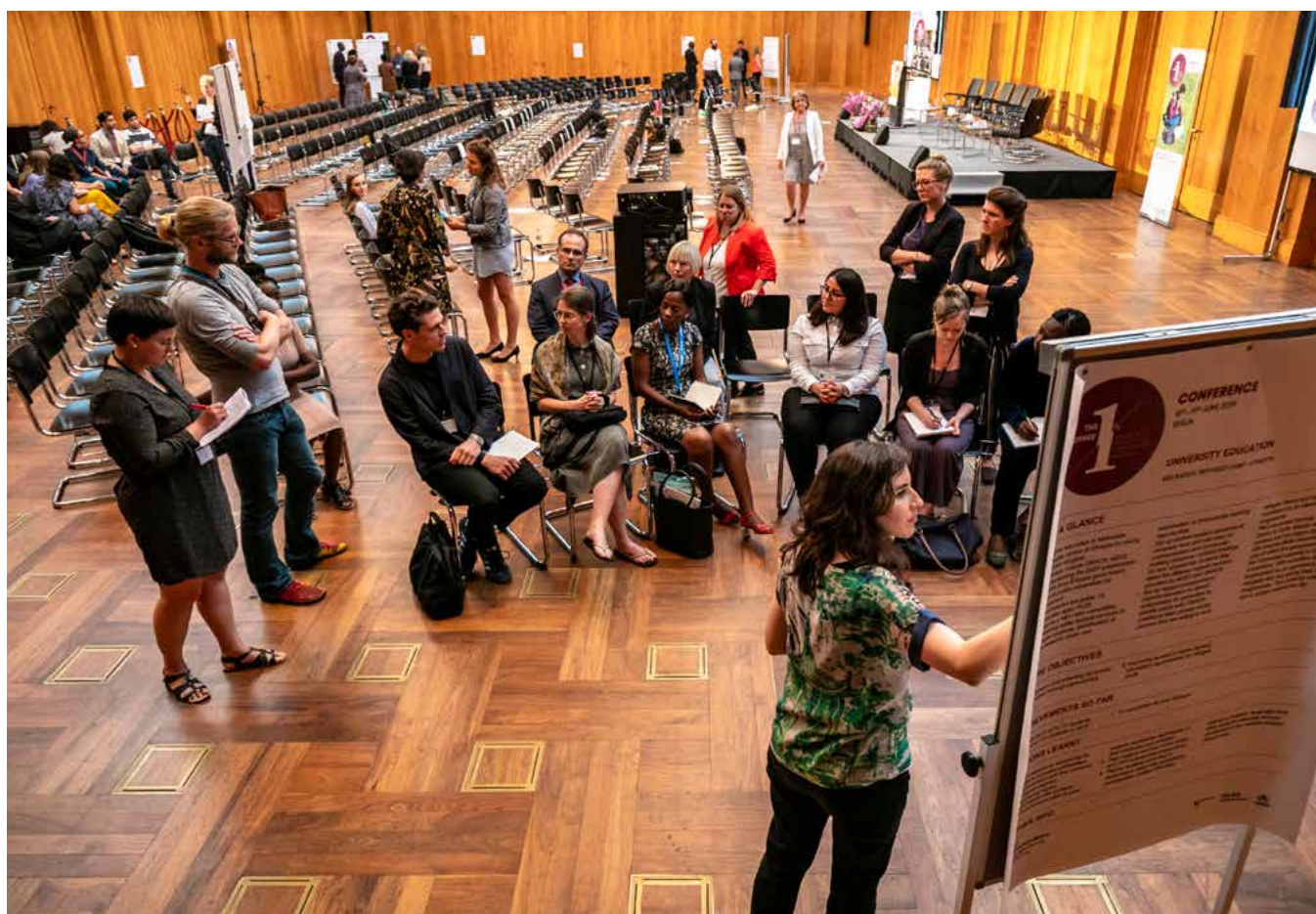
¹ The moderator for this discussion was Martin Thümmel, Head of Division – Coordination Staff for Refugees and Migration, German Federal Foreign Office. Speakers included Eunice Akello, Programme Manager at Windle International Uganda, Aki Takada, Associate Director managing the Syrian Scholars Initiative at the Japan ICU Foundation, and Michael Corlin, Senior Adviser with Education Cannot Wait.

- **Targeted student support** such as language training, counselling, career guidance and trainings geared towards transition to employment are needed to complement academic programmes and improve outcomes.
- **Student-led initiatives and local organizations are often preferred partners**, both for reasons of cost-effectiveness and to empower in-country actors.
- **Increasing access to higher education starts with improving retention in secondary school.**
- In efforts to improve access to education at either the secondary or tertiary level, **inclusion of host community and refugee youth is paramount to social cohesion** on campus and in the community to ensure cooperation and support for a motivating learning and living environment for all without conflict and limiting prejudices.

The workshop participants agreed that going forward it is necessary to:

- amplify the **impact of partnership**;
- recognize that expanded funding alone will not meet the demand for higher learning,
- **enhance the links between development and humanitarian actors** and capitalize on their resources to provide and increase access to higher education in crisis and protracted situations.

Photo. Participants discuss in the workshop 'higher education and transition to employment'



Integrating refugee students and internationalising higher education

The internationalisation of higher education is driven by global competition between higher education institutions and systems, the global need for skilled workers, the need to prepare students for the global labour market and by global challenges such as climate change, the energy crisis and migration. Internationalisation of higher education institutions are both a pre-requisite for and result of the participation of refugees in higher education. For example, for the inclusion of refugees and scholars at risk new funding may become available to support them which in turn may also support internationalisation efforts. The workshop discussed concepts of internationalisation in the higher education sector in Germany, Jordan and Somalia.¹

Key Takeaways

- **Refugee scholars and students enrich the research environment** with their unique vantage point, academic background, theoretical orientation and knowledge.
- **Language barriers are a prevalent problem.** Students need to be proficient in the language of instruction. Language learning courses need to be offered prior to starting their studies. If the language of instruction (e.g., English) and the language spoken in the host country are different, courses in both languages should be offered. The time and resources needed to teach and learn both languages must be taken into account.
- **Awareness raising initiatives need to be part of university activities** to facilitate participation, interaction and integration of refugee students. **Refugee students are different from other international students.** They have **special protection and support needs**. But often the majority of people, including students, are not aware of these needs nor the implications of being a refugee. Networks and **peer-to-peer support must be promoted to embrace diversity and increase social cohesion** at a university.
- With regard to the distribution of scholarships, there should be **transparency on the criteria and process of the selection to prevent conflict or feelings of resentment**. Admission and integration of refugee students should be coordinated by different universities across the country to avoid overburdening of one or few universities.

¹ Please read the [concept note for this workshop](#) for more details. The workshop was moderated by Dr Christian Hülshörster, Head of Division Scholarship Programmes South at the DAAD. Speakers were Prof Dr Karin Amos, Professor at the Institute of Education of the Eberhard Karls University Tübingen and Prorector, Germany, Prof Dr Manar Fayyad, President of the German Jordanian University in Amman, Jordan, and Dr Fouzia Warsame, Dean Faculty of Education & Social Sciences at Somali National University, Somalia.



Photo. Participants discuss during the workshop 'research and data'

Research and data

Research, evaluation and data collection will be important to inform and monitor progress towards achieving the aims and pledges of the Global Refugee Forum. **Multiple opportunities exist for academia to contribute to understanding access and inclusion in higher education**, national policies, transition to employment, social engagement and student leadership, and progress towards self-reliance. The discussion focused on the **role of research and data in advancing higher education for refugees**. It looked at research topics such as host communities, institutional capacities, rights and legal aspects, gender issues, policy barriers, location and context, conflict and emergencies, education quality, special needs, and language issues.¹ While research on higher education for refugees has seen major growth over the last five years, participants pointed out that:

- 1. Existing data is often underused due to narrow approaches**, lack of exchange and insufficient communication to decision makers. This results in what was termed a "graveyard of data." To counter this risk, data-holders, researcher and donors are encouraged to work towards improved and broadened communication and exchange.
- 2. There remain gaps in knowledge.** There is a need for more quantitative, sector-wide and outcome-related data while also acknowledging the role of qualitative data to uncover blind spots with regard to, for instance, obstacles to refugee inclusion in higher education institutions.

¹ Please read the [concept note for this workshop](#) for more background information. The workshop on research and data was moderated by economist and peace researcher Professor Tilman Brück. Speakers included Dr Kerry Bystrom, Associate Dean Bard College Berlin, Dr David Hollow, Director of jigsaw-consult, Dr Steffen Belgang, Researcher at the Humboldt University of Berlin, and Innocent Ntumba Tshilombo, Researcher in Kenya.

Key Takeaways

- Generating reliable and policy-oriented data, especially longitudinal outcome data, requires **long-term commitments and funding led by an international organization** with expertise and capacity in the area.
- **Data and research should be produced with application in mind**, including how it will be used, for what purpose and in what context.
- Research and data need to **incorporate the views of stakeholders and research subjects** to avoid common pitfall of research subjects not having genuine participation in shaping the research process. Innocent Tshilombo, a researcher living in Kenya's Kakuma camp as a refugee, likened this to an "invisible ceiling" hindering participation of refugees in research about refugees.
- The proposed [Global Academic Network](#)¹ may provide a solution to the previous considerations. To adequately address the needs in refugee higher education research, such a network would function as link between researchers, funders, people of concern and existing data. The network should also focus on empowering local researchers, including persons of concern, in order to challenge traditional ways of knowledge production and to add new topics to the agenda. Finally, the network could support data collection on global refugee high education enrolment rates through combined research and mapping efforts.

¹ The Global Compact on Refugees states in paragraph 43 that "a global academic network on refugee, other forced displacement, and statelessness issues will be established, involving universities, academic alliances, and research institutions, together with UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders, to facilitate research, training and scholarship opportunities which result in specific deliverables in support of the objectives of the global compact. Efforts will be made to ensure regional diversity and expertise from a broad range of relevant subject areas." The Global Academic Network (GAN) is one of the compact's proposed specific arrangements for burden and responsibility sharing. GAN will be formally established on 17th and 18th December 2019 during the first Global Refugee Forum. GAN will have three working groups focusing on: (1) Research related to the objectives of the GCR; (2) Teaching on refugee and displacement issues; and (3) Education and support for refugee students and scholars, including through scholarships.

Higher education and transition to employment

Key to achieving the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees is the **expanded participation of refugees in local labour markets and economies**. Restrictive labour policies or lack of access to decent jobs, however, may discourage refugees from investing in higher education or improving their skills for work. For those who have achieved higher education, access to lawful employment, entrepreneurship opportunities or other opportunities for economic inclusion may nonetheless be limited due to a wide range of challenges. **Supporting the transition to employment has, therefore, become a priority in higher education programming for refugees.** Participants in this session explored how some of the challenges facing refugee graduates can be mitigated and overcome.¹

Key Takeaways

- Barriers to gainful employment, such as **legal restrictions on the right to work, should be addressed in a practical manner** including through advocacy efforts by local stakeholders backed by international partners.
- **Entrepreneurship and the global digital labour market should be explored** for promising alternatives despite restrictive local work contexts.
- Learners should have **access to employment-oriented skills training** during their studies. Access to comprehensive information on the legal situation and how to navigate it, internships, online job search and application writing skills and other professional readiness training will support effective transition to employment.
- **Alumni networks, both face-to-face and digital platforms, should be used** as platforms to share experiences and information, establish connections and offer support.
- Higher education programming should **engage the private sector and entrepreneurs** to achieve economic inclusion and livelihoods solutions.
- Stakeholders should invest in **building the ownership among local stakeholders** in higher education for refugees. The buy-in from local government, organizations, institutions and communities is key.

¹ Please see the [concept note for the workshop](#) including background information, good practice examples and information about the speakers. Amanda Kelleher, Director of International Education at Luminus Education in Jordan, led the workshop. Judit Demjén, GIZ Pakistan, and Marie N'Dou, DAFI alumna and [UN Volunteer](#) with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Ghana provided inputs.

Student-led initiatives

This World Café invited discussion on how student-led initiatives and youth engagement can lead in the design, development and execution of actions that can improve high-quality post-secondary and higher education opportunities for refugees. In groups, participants discussed (1) collaboration between host community and refugee students, (2) mentorship for education and employment, (3) Supporting student integration in institutions, (4) the role of students in expanding higher education opportunities for refugees and (5) national and global networks.¹

Key Takeaways

- **Initiatives led by students are highly effective.** Students can easily reach their peers and function as relatable role models. This is especially significant with regard to increasing the number of female students in higher education.
- Student-led initiatives do not only benefit the refugee community. By **involving host communities**, their work can contribute to the development of the host countries while also **challenging negative perceptions** about refugees.
- Support initiatives must **target refugee youth early** on: secondary school students or those who dropped out benefit from **mentoring, support initiatives, and preparatory skills training**.
- Mentoring programmes such as **buddy schemes** bring together refugee students with host community students. In order to be **sustainable**, the volunteers have to be appreciated and rewarded appropriately. These types of initiatives profit from **long-term commitment** from institutions and volunteers.
- **Existing student networks should be strengthened and supported.** They could be scaled to national and global levels to increase outreach and coordination while keeping in mind specific challenges that conflict-affected refugee youth face. When faced with extreme challenges, a student network might not be the first priority. Student-led initiatives should carry on after graduation to alumni networks.
- **Institutions should support refugee youth with leadership and management skills training** for the initiatives to be most effective, successful and sustainable.

¹ Please read the [World Café concept note](#) for more details. Michelle Manks, World University Service of Canada (WUSC), moderated the session. Faida Alida, DAFI student; Narine George, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg; Ella Ininahazwe, Kepler; Selin Susan Mathews, Bosco; Simon Marot Touloung, DAFI alumnus and Global Youth Advisory Council provided inputs.

Connected learning

Connected and blended education approaches extend higher learning opportunities to those who cannot access a university or who prefer a more flexible way to study. This session explored the path to scaling connected learning programmes, identifying the barriers and discussing ways to address them. The World Café focused on five critical areas with regard to design and implementation of connected education in refugee contexts, including: (1) partnerships, particularly with local partners, (2) scale and cost, (3) structural considerations, (4) the role of academia and (5) stakeholders.¹

Key Takeaways

- **Local stakeholders** – including refugee students and alumni – need to be involved in the design and scaling of connected learning programmes. This requires infrastructure and training of facilitators. For instance, Jesuit World Learning has moved to a student-to-leaders model in which students become leaders after finishing the programme. This approach is sustainable, as graduates are able to create new initiatives wherever they go.
- **Cultivating student communities, both local and online**, benefits learners who are able to connect with peers. Student dropout has been a challenge for a number of online courses and student communities may help to address this. Programme design should focus on developing engaging pedagogies. Additionally, programme design needs to factor in challenges such as infrastructure, access to the internet, capacity limitations of local NGOs, censorship and governmental limitations on social media and cyber security.
- Online learning platforms should be available online and offline, as well as adaptable for smart phones so that **digital solutions are adjusted to the reality of the users**.
- **Costs of accessible and successful courses** include investments in producing content, often in multiple languages, accreditation and building and managing partnerships. Under-utilised resources such as co-working spaces, publishers and subscription-based journals, alumni and student organizations, retired professors, start-ups and incubators, public libraries, tech companies and business associations should be used more efficiently. In order to cover costs, **alternatives to grant funding should be explored**, including corporate social responsibility models, community contributions, public financing, or private sector contributions, e.g., donation of company laptops.
- Design of programmes and courses should anticipate scaling. **Sustainability and cost effectiveness can also be created by sharing and building on what exists** (e.g., open educational resources, open source platforms and programmes, open data, open research). Smaller learning units, micro-credentials and strengthening modularity and interoperability of courses and programmes should be explored further. Better **mutual recognition and transcription of credits and certificates** could improve the understanding of different education and learning traditions and contexts.

¹ Please read the [World Café concept note](#) for details. Jackie Strecker from UNHCR moderated the World Café. Expert inputs were provided by Prof Dr Wolfgang Seibel, University of Konstanz; Dr Dominic Orr, Kiron Open Higher Education; Peter Balleis SJ, Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) and Joanna Zimmerman, Arizona State University.

Higher education inclusion projects

Many higher education institutions have initiatives focused on inclusion of refugees. The World Café discussed six topics related to support measures for refugee students, including: implementation, sustainability, financing, good practices, challenges and empowerment.¹

Key Takeaways

- **“Think big but start small.”** It is essential to first identify university staff supportive of the inclusion project before branching out to the broader university administration.
- **Flexible communication and problem solving:** Evaluation meetings between teaching staff, psychologists and others can help to evaluate and respond to the situation of each student. Student expectations must be properly managed, and a transparent atmosphere should be established at the earliest stages of the project.
- **Knowledge and experience exchange:** Broad communication of successful initiatives and good practices is crucial for the sustainability and visibility of inclusion projects.
- **Recognition of previous education:** Refugee students need to prove their previous education record when the corresponding documents are unavailable. A common procedure in Germany, for example, is to help prepare a student’s CV that includes all relevant information.
- **Support staff and teachers engaged in the project:** Teachers need special training so that they can effectively support the integration of refugee students. Along with this, staff members need to learn how to employ self-care techniques since they may experience higher levels of stress when dealing with more intense cases such of traumatized refugee students.
- **Embrace diversity and work with challenges:** Mixing different cultures can be challenging for staff members and volunteers as well as refugees. Feelings of mistrust can emerge. The university staff can provide safe spaces to help mediate conflict. Teaching the values of the host country with regard to democratic values, equality and rights in the language classes or separate courses may also be part of the inclusion project.
- **Encourage and facilitate peer-to-peer support:** Refugees can help other refugees and build new networks and projects. Refugees engaged in peer-to-peer support could be encouraged to become mentors for which they would be given certificates. In this way, the university administrative staff would have additional resources to support refugee students.
- **Gain refugee interest:** Refugee students will develop a positive attitude towards the inclusion projects once they make use of its services such as a training for job interviews or taking professional photos for job applications.
- **Secure funding:** It is essential to frame and develop funding proposals for university inclusion projects that take into account a potential donor’s funding priorities.

¹ Please read the [World Café concept note](#) for details. Bernd Fischer, German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, moderated the session. Expert inputs were provided by Helena Barroco, Global Platform for Syrian Students, Dr Christina von Behr, University of Applied Science Bremen, Sadiki Bamberineza, Kepler, Christian Gerhus, University Siegen, Britta Schlüter de Castro, University of Cologne, and Khaola Al Rifai, Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Towards the Global Refugee Forum

I would like to ask all of you to come up with new creative ideas, challenge the status quo and give us some food for thought – so that when the Forum happens in December and as we go beyond in making this compact a reality, we can really transform that one per cent into a much greater number.

Filippo Grandi

The most important voices heard during the conference were those of the young refugee women and men who had prevailed against the odds to identify opportunities and pursue their higher education. But they did not stop there: these young women and men are passionate advocates, inspired leaders and skilled professionals. They teach, work, mentor, advise, research, advocate and innovate. And they continue learning. It is in the spirit of their determination, talent and grit that the German Federal Foreign Office, DAAD and UNHCR are dedicated to **placing higher education as a pillar of the overall topic of education during the Global Refugee Forum.**

The findings and key messages of the conference will inform the reflections and efforts leading up to the Forum. They will be shared with Member States and stakeholders that have or will engage as [co-sponsors to the topic of education](#) and livelihoods but also with all other interested partners. Thus, the German Federal Foreign Office and UNHCR will help **initiate, collect and coordinate pledges, contributions, good practices¹ and partnerships ahead of the Global Refugee Forum.**

UNHCR recognizes that partners bring a wide variety of experience, resource and potential to the table and stands ready to support the development of timely, appropriate, innovative pledges and contributions to **achieve measurable gains on higher education.**²

“The Global Compact is a big opportunity but also an obligation to deliver,” said Thomas Zahneisen, Director for Humanitarian Assistance at the Federal Foreign Office.

¹ Good practices submitted for the Global Refugee Forum to support education can be found [here](#).

² Please contact UNHCR's Tertiary Education Team at hqeduc@unhcr.org

CONFERENCE MATERIAL AND FURTHER READING

Conference Material

- [Conference Programme](#)
- [Posters presented at the Marketplace](#)
- [Speakers' Booklet](#)
- [List of Participants](#)
- [Speeches and presentations](#)
- [Conference Impressions](#)

Global Compact on Refugees and Global Refugee Forum

- Global Compact on Refugees ([PDF, English](#)) ([PDF, Deutsch](#))
- Information on the [Global Refugee Forum](#)
 - [Guidance Note, Pledges and Contributions and Good Practices](#).
 - [List of education co-sponsors](#)
 - [Good practices submitted by partners](#)

Facts and Figures

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WORDS OF THANKS

The convenors thank all participants for the examples, insights, lessons and testimonies that they shared at the conference. We stand ready to work in collaboration towards our shared goals and responsibilities of ensuring safe and sustainable futures for refugees through higher education.

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