

Closing session of the twelfth High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges

“Protection and resilience of refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless people and host communities in the context of pandemics”

GER contribution

- Already before the pandemic, the risk of a refugee child not attending school was twice as high as for non-refugees. The access of young refugees to education is severely limited compared to the global average. For example, worldwide, around forty percent of young people have access to tertiary education, while the percentage of refugees is just three percent. And as I said – that was the situation before Covid-19.
- With the pandemic, our common goal of granting access to at least 15 percent of young refugee women and men by 2030 has become even more difficult to achieve.
- This is particularly worrying considering that inclusive, equitable education and a successful completion of higher education offers new opportunities not only for the refugees taking part, but for society as a whole. Many of those graduating are committed to act as role models and contribute to peacebuilding, reconstruction, and the sustainable development of their countries of origin as well as host countries.
- The pandemic pushed the digitalization of education. This could have positive long-term effects on the access to education for refugees; however, a strong focus will have to be put on addressing data protection and privacy concerns.

So what has Germany been doing concretely to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on refugee tertiary education?

- Keeping education going during Covid-19 has required resourcefulness, innovation, invention, and collaboration – in Germany and worldwide.

In Germany:

- In order to foster peer learning and exchange of good practices, the German Academic Exchange Network (DAAD) dedicated its conference on the occasion of World Refugee Day to the question of how universities and refugee students in Germany are dealing with the challenges posed by Covid-19. The conference documents are available online.
- The DAAD “Integra programme” that offers language and other specialized courses to enable optimal integration of refugee students into German university studies quickly implemented concepts for digital teaching and learning:
- Digital teaching formats were introduced, students were provided with laptops, tutorials were recorded as videos and uploaded online, learning packages placed in front of the door for contactless delivery
- In addition, the DAAD programme “Welcome” in which local students get involved with refugees to help them integrate into university studies in Germany quickly decided to contribute itself to the fight against the pandemic. A project taskforce at the Technical University of Bochum for example uses the 3D printers of the University and the German Mining Museum to produce face shields and surgical mask straps.

Worldwide:

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- With its funding, Germany enabled UNHCR's DAFI scholarship programme to quickly react to Covid-19 in more than 50 host countries around the globe. Germany provided additional funding for DAFI to cover costs caused by the pandemic.
- The pandemic showed how vital higher education for refugees is. Doctors and nurses for example who have received their education through a scholarship could help tackle the pandemic.
- Other initiatives such as expanding access to open resources, offering online classes, broadcasting lessons via radio stations or mobile teachers visiting refugees without access to remote education were launched.
- In the context of its development cooperation, Germany is particularly investing in the continuation of technical and vocational education and training measures despite Covid-19 restrictions, also to mitigate the secondary economic effects of the pandemic. For example through the Special Initiative on Forced Displacement, Germany reached approximately 350.000 people affected by forced displacement with TVET measures in the last five years. The special response package for Covid-19 focuses on stabilizing fragile regions affected by displacement, for example by securing income and investing in TVET and employment measures.