



DOUBLING OUR IMPACT

THIRD COUNTRY HIGHER EDUCATION
PATHWAYS FOR REFUGEES



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

About this Report

This report was prepared by WUSC in partnership with UNESCO and UNHCR. February 2020.

Acknowledgements

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About WUSC

WUSC (World University Service of Canada) is a Canadian non-profit organization dedicated to improving education, economic, and empowerment opportunities for youth around the world.

wusc.ca

About UNHCR

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.

unhcr.org

About UNESCO

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture.

unesco.org

Front cover: June 16, 2019. Germany. Refugee student delegation tours Berlin ahead of international conference on Higher Education for Refugees. © UNHCR



Syrian ICU student at a summer festival organized by Glocal Mitaka, a community organization, in Tokyo, July 2019 © Japan ICU Foundation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Background	6
Higher Education Journey Map	7
Countries of First Asylum	8
Academic Admissions	9
Immigration	11
Post-Arrival	13
Program Design Elements	14
Future Directions	16
End notes	17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and WUSC (World University Service of Canada) brought together stakeholders with an identified interest or active engagement in developing education opportunities for refugees as complementary pathways for admission in third countries. The two-day international conference *Education Opportunities as Complementary Pathways for Admission* (the Paris Meeting), explored country-specific and region-specific needs and barriers for refugees to access third country education pathways, and identified some emerging good practices to address barriers and expand opportunities.

Refugees often face barriers to access higher education, in particular when higher education opportunities are in third countries. These include challenges with academic admissions, with immigration and visa processes, with post-arrival support, and opportunities for protection and durable solutions such as resettlement or local integration. This report maps out a higher education journey, outlining the variety of challenges that refugees face in accessing third country education opportunities. Promising practices and initiatives that break down identified barriers and enhance opportunities for refugees are highlighted.

There are several program design elements to consider when developing higher education programs that support refugees to access complementary pathways for admission. The Paris Meeting highlighted the importance of the following key elements of program design and approach to third country education opportunities:

- Develop and maintain strong, diverse and strategic partnerships and coordination.
- Meaningfully include and empower refugees.
- Provide new and additional solutions and opportunities to refugees.
- Ensure refugee protection and dignity across interventions.
- Develop mechanisms to ensure legal status, family unity, qualifications recognition and an option to legally remain in the third country after graduation.
- Be context-specific and flexible in approaches.
- Ensure transparency and equity in communications and process.
- Engage host communities and students in refugee welcome and inclusion.
- Develop sustainable and predictable education pathways that support refugee aspirations and choice

The Paris Meeting represents an important milestone in the committed effort and focused dialogue among diverse stakeholders working at the juncture of higher education and durable solutions for refugees. Further exploration and demonstration of the principles outlined here is needed to significantly scale and expand quality higher education opportunities and third country education opportunities for refugees.

The global higher education community is well-placed to meaningfully respond to the refugee crisis and demonstrate significant leadership. Higher education solutions in third countries can support both the education and future skills development of refugees, as well as increasing their opportunities to access a durable solution.

There is a need for significant investments in the systems and infrastructure that support third country education opportunities for refugees globally. Higher education networks—including students—can play an important leadership role in activating this potential and breaking down existing barriers.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2018, there were an estimated 70.8 million forcibly displaced persons across the globe. Eighty four percent (84%) of the world's refugees live in the global South, and often lack adequate support and resources. Refugee camps, meant to be short-term solutions for displaced populations, are becoming multi-generational sites, with four out of five refugees living in protracted situations.¹

Less than 1% of all refugees are ever resettled to a safe third country. The global need for resettlement places far outpaces available resettlement capacity. Fewer than 5% of refugees who have been identified as in desperate need of resettlement accessed safe solutions in 2018.² Complementary pathways provide additional opportunities for more refugees to access third country solutions. However, the systems to facilitate access to complementary pathways are less developed and the scale of these opportunities has been limited.

With an estimated 61% of the global refugee population being urban-based,³ the service delivery and infrastructure in countries of asylum are often overwhelmed when a refugee influx occurs. Furthermore, the systems in place were never planned nor designed to provide for the long-term needs or to enable and promote the self-reliance of refugee communities. Essential services, such as education, have been underinvested in for decades and refugee children and youth face significant barriers to access quality education at every level.⁴ At the tertiary level, a bleak 3% of refugee youth access higher education at all, compared to 37% of youth globally.⁵

Recognizing the scale of the global refugee crisis and that classic humanitarian response approaches to a perceived temporary challenge cannot meet the needs, world leaders have gathered to take action. The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which was affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018, signaled greater global solidarity with refugees and the communities that host them. One of the main goals of the GCR is to increase the availability of options for refugees to find protection and solutions by accessing third country solutions, including through the expansion of complementary pathways for admission. To achieve this, leadership from a range of actors, new partnerships, and creative and bold approaches are needed.

To respond to the limited educational opportunities for refugees, UNHCR recently set out—in Refugee

COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS

Complementary Pathways are safe and regulated avenues for refugees that complement resettlement by providing lawful stay in a third country where their international protection needs are met. They are additional to resettlement and do not substitute the protection afforded to refugees under the international protection regime. Complementary pathways include existing admission to which refugees may be eligible to apply, but which may require operational adjustments to facilitate refugee access, as well as specific admissions schemes for refugees that fall outside of resettlement (e.g. private refugee sponsorship). An important feature of many complementary pathways is that refugees are able to exercise control over their own solutions by accessing them independently using publicly available information and processes.

Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion—an ambitious target to ensure that 15% of refugees are enrolled in higher education by 2030.⁶ With similar ambition and a commitment to scale new solutions and create opportunities, UNHCR also unveiled a Three Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, with a goal to see 2 million refugees accessing complementary pathways over the next decade.⁷ To achieve both these targets, and provide refugees with opportunities and hope for the future, new actors need to step up.

The global higher education sector is well placed to make a significant impact in providing durable solutions for refugees in third countries and contribute to enhanced responsibility-sharing. In a very tangible way, the higher education sector can open and expand opportunities for refugees to access and attend universities and colleges in third countries, and facilitate access to safety and protection.

*Third country education solutions have a double impact on refugee lives—responding to their education ambitions and skills development, and increasing their access to a durable solution.*⁸

⁸ This report, and the meeting it is based upon, focuses on higher education opportunities that can contribute to the creation and expansion of complementary pathways (e.g. refugee students accessing a student visa). It does not include the many important initiatives coming from the global higher education community, and others, that also support complementary pathways, but that are not predicated on access to a higher education opportunity (e.g. university community privately sponsoring a refugee family).



Blu Hpo Htoo, former Student Refugee Program (SRP) student graduating from Algoma University in 2017 © WUSC

BACKGROUND

In November 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and WUSC (World University Service of Canada) brought together stakeholders with an identified interest or active engagement in developing education opportunities for refugees as complementary pathways for admission in third countries. The two-day international conference *Education Opportunities as Complementary Pathways for Admission* (the Paris Meeting), explored country-specific and region-specific needs and barriers for refugees to access third country education pathways, and identified some emerging good practices to address barriers and expand opportunities.

This report is a summary of the Paris Meeting discussions, highlighting key barriers that prevent refugees from successfully accessing education opportunities as complementary pathways to admission to third countries, and promising practices that address these barriers. It is not an exhaustive list of the many initiatives working at the juncture of higher education access and durable solutions for refugees.

We hope this report will provide both practical information on what works, and key considerations to inspire greater collective action and partnerships to develop and significantly expand quality higher education opportunities and complementary pathways in third countries.



Portugal. A Dream to Rebuild. Alaa, from Syria, has just three months left to finish her latest architectural design at the University of Lisboa. Alaa received a scholarship from the Global Platform for Syrian students, a nonprofit initiative based in Portugal which gives students scholarships to finish their education. @UNHCR/Bruno Galan Ruiz

HIGHER EDUCATION JOURNEY MAP

This section outlines an example of a young refugees' experience, and the barriers they face in trying to navigate, access, and pursue a higher education opportunity as a complementary pathway to a third country. In reality, these journeys are unique, non-linear, and context-specific; as refugees face multiple, systemic barriers in accessing existing options. This journey map presumes a refugee has successfully completed secondary school, something that for the majority of refugee youth (76%) is out of reach.⁹ It is important to note that access to quality secondary education, and

the subsequent barriers in access to higher education opportunities, disproportionately impacts refugee girls and young women.

The Journey Map is organized into four stages: **Countries of First Asylum, Academic Admissions, Immigration, and Post-Arrival.** Each highlight the variety of challenges refugees often face at each step of the journey. Targeted solutions and good practices identified at the Paris Meeting to address these barriers and challenges are also presented.

Countries of First Asylum

While still in a country of first asylum, refugees aspiring to higher education in a third country face several barriers. One is that there are **very few quality opportunities for refugees to pursue higher education** in third countries, and there are systemic barriers to accessing the few that are available. Of the scholarships that exist for refugees, many are restricted to particular nationalities or have other restrictive criteria (e.g. program of study, age limits, no dependents, religion). Wherever possible, programs should strive to be expansive and inclusive, with clear and transparent information about the program details, application criteria, and expectations. While vulnerability is a component of some higher education programs for refugees, clarity and transparency on how this is assessed and measured remains a challenge.

Refugee students may also be eligible for the large number of non refugee-specific scholarships and educational opportunities. However, many of these scholarships are only available for a short period of time, for a limited number of students, or cover only a portion of the full cost. There is **a lack of sustainable scholarship opportunities and a lack of special considerations given to refugees**. This means that many refugees miss out on these opportunities altogether. Wherever possible, higher education institutions should design sustainable and predictable scholarship programs for refugees, with guaranteed funding for the full period of study and the ability to scale. Refugee-specific programs need to be developed that take into account the very nature of the refugee situation, including the fact that refugees cannot return to their countries of origin and—in some cases—are unable to return to their current countries of asylum. Scholarship opportunities should anticipate and plan for realistic, sustainable post-graduation options for refugees entering these programs.

Promising Practice

► To respond to the need for accurate and streamlined information about available higher education opportunities globally, the Institute of International Education developed the Platform for Education in Emergencies Response (PEER)—an online clearinghouse ¹⁰

Another barrier that refugees face is **a lack of access to quality information on higher education opportunities**, scholarships, and study visas; as well as conditions, prerequisites, and procedures for application and where to find support. Information is piecemeal with refugees relying heavily on word-of-mouth, social-media, NGOs, and informal networks for information. This can result in the dissemination of inaccurate and false information, and can lead to students missing out, applying to opportunities for which they are ineligible, or pursuing options with questionable integrity or significant financial obligations. Programs and higher education institutions that want to support refugee applicants, and have modified their processes to support refugees, can play a critical role in ensuring that their information is clear, transparent, and available in several formats (online and in-print).

Limited access to financial resources is a barrier to refugee education at nearly every step along their journey. Refugees generally have limited resources and access to financing, often do not have the legal right to work and earn money, and have economic and family obligations that further limit the available funds they have for schooling. This means that accessing higher education, especially in a third country, without a full scholarship is impossible for most refugees.



At an event to launch the World University Service of Canada's manual on student refugee scholarships, Amelie Fabian speaks about her experience. © UNHCR

Academic Admissions

Refugee students can face several admission barriers when trying to access higher education. While universities and colleges often seek to uphold their standards and process to ensure fairness and consistency of admissions decisions, refugees do not start on equal footing with many other applicants and **rigid admissions processes** can quickly screen out bright, capable refugee students. As a result, equity and fairness may necessitate different standards and processes when assessing refugee applicants. This is especially true for displaced young women who face significant additional barriers to accessing and succeeding through school. Consideration for the different experiences and barriers that refugees face, especially girls and young women, can inform more equitable admissions processes. Rigid admissions processes, without contextual understanding, flexibility and alternative processes, can deny qualified, motivated refugees access to higher education.

One of the main obstacles that refugees face when applying for higher education is **inadequate or unavailable documentation and the lack of recognition of their prior studies and qualifications**. For many

Promising Practice

► Institutions can put flexible processes in place, and work with trained credential evaluators, such as the World Education Services¹¹ or government agencies, such as Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)¹², to assess the validity of refugee qualifications through various means, including subject-specific testing. Care should be taken to ensure that the costs of credential assessments do not further burden applicants.

refugees, access to official documentation and the prescribed method of transmission of transcripts to higher education institutions is a significant and often insuperable barrier. There are many reasons refugees may not have access to their documents and qualifications. For some, it may be unsafe to contact the government authorities and institutions that can issue or validate academic documentation. In some instances, those institutions may no longer exist.

Where displacement has resulted in incomplete studies or unrecognized partial qualifications, institutions can offer bridging courses or conditional acceptance to help refugee students catch-up and bridge into full programs of study, without missing out on the opportunity altogether.

Another common academic admissions challenge for refugees is **limited access to language tests and high cut-off scores**. While fluency in the language of academic instruction is important, for many refugees, access to language training and the necessary tests can be a significant barrier. Language training courses are not always available or affordable to refugees. Some refugees cannot obtain permission or afford to travel to language centers outside of refugee contexts for courses or testing. Recognized testing facilities are often not available in many locations where refugee populations reside and where they are, language certification tests tend to be costly.

Refugees may struggle to score well on language tests for a variety of reasons, including limited exposure to the language of instruction (especially in an academic setting) and few opportunities for test preparation. Higher education institutions can offer greater flexibility on language skills requirements and/or additional opportunities for refugees to strengthen their language skills. Pre-arrival and post-arrival language training, academic writing support, and language and bridging courses prior to the start of an academic program can help prepare refugees for success.

Even when scholarships are available, **high application fees and burdensome application procedures** also pose a challenge for refugee students. For example, many academic scholarships, such as those run out of Oxford University or Columbia Global Centers, require that applicants be admitted into a specific program and institution before applying for funding. Academic programs often have fees for application, language tests, and credential assessments. These fees can be insurmountable to refugees, or limit refugees to applying to one opportunity only—putting all one's resources and hopes into one application at the expense of other relevant and compelling education opportunities. Waiving application fees, having open calls prior to submitting formal applications, and combining academic admission and scholarships applications into one package, with all fees covered, is a best practice. Travel and visa expenses should also be part of the same package, as they are often impossible for refugees to absorb.

Promising Practice

► The Catalan Scholarship for Refugees,¹⁵ funded by the Government of Catalonia, provides refugees who have not completed higher education with the opportunity to study at a Catalan university and access a complementary pathway. Students are supported with Catalan and Spanish language classes prior to departing for Spain, and can access additional language support upon arrival, prior to the commencement of their formal studies.

► To address documentation and qualifications recognition challenges at the scale required, a globally recognized qualifications passport has been developed and is being tested. Drawing on the methodology developed by NOKUT, the Council of Europe launched the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees¹³ and UNESCO recently unveiled the UNESCO Qualifications Passport (UQP).¹⁴ In the fall of 2019, the UQP was piloted in Zambia with plans to make it more widely available in the year ahead.

Additional expenses not covered by partial scholarships may also pose undue pressure on refugee students and their families, and make certain programs out of reach to refugees. Scholarship programs cover different aspects of student expenses, from the core tuition, books, and small living stipend, to comprehensive scholarships that support professional development, housing, family support, travel, and financial support after graduation. Consideration for the unique financial pressures, general lack of access to financial services, and needs of refugees should be taken into account when designing scholarships, recognizing that the scope of the scholarship can impact their integration and academic success. A balance should be struck to ensure that students are funded at a level that allows them to focus on their studies, in comfort and safety, while also helping avail scholarship opportunities to as many refugees as possible and promoting the self-reliance and integration of refugees in the countries of academic opportunities through access to the job market. Similarly, scholarships and education pathways should be funded to be sustainable, providing refugees with long-term predictable education opportunities.

Immigration

After navigating the many barriers and challenges related to accessing admissions and securing funding in a university or college in a third country, refugee students often face significant hurdles to obtain the necessary immigration documentation and permissions to travel to the third country. Advocacy and close coordination with host country governments can help mitigate some of these barriers or ease restrictions allowing bright, motivated refugee students to continue their studies in a third country.

Immigration and visa barriers that prevent refugee students from accessing third country education opportunities include **limited access to travel documents**. Refugee students often need to have a valid passport and are regularly required to prove that they intend to return to their country of current residence or origin after concluding their studies. Both of these requirements are often impossible to overcome for refugees.

A valid travel document is required for international travel. Such documents may include national passports, Convention Travel Documents (CTD) issued by the governments of their first countries of asylum to recognized refugees or by the countries admitting a refugee for the purpose of study or other complementary pathways. People in need of international protection often leave their countries of origin in a hurry without identification documents. Even when they do have their original documents, these documents expire, or are lost or destroyed during their displacement. Some refugees are born in a country of asylum and never get documents from their countries of origin. Where refugees do not benefit from formal refugee status determination or a functioning asylum system, it may be impossible for refugees to prove their

Promising Practice

- ▶ L’Occitanie Scholarship Program¹⁶ for refugees is providing scholarships to Syrian refugees and, upon arrival, providing intensive support to students to help them with their asylum application while studying in France.
- ▶ WUSC¹⁷ Student Refugee Program (SRP) is a unique sponsorship program that combines higher education opportunities with protection and permanent resettlement for refugee youth.
- ▶ The Global Platform for Syrian Students¹⁹ provides higher education opportunities for refugees in Portugal. The platform works in close collaboration with the government and provides many “wrap-around services” to help refugee students access complementary pathways for admission, including chartered direct flights for students to Portugal.

identity in order to access a CTD. Travel documents are difficult to obtain and even with one, visa-issuing authorities frequently deny visas to those without a valid passport.

Governments should facilitate refugee admission through complementary pathways by extending student visas with special waivers on the return and income requirements, and giving access to a more permanent solution through asylum process or permanent residency. While this often requires some operational and policy adjustments, this is a clear way to significantly increase the number of third country solutions available for refugees, while facilitating their continued education. Governments have already shown a willingness to innovate and adjust systems to allow

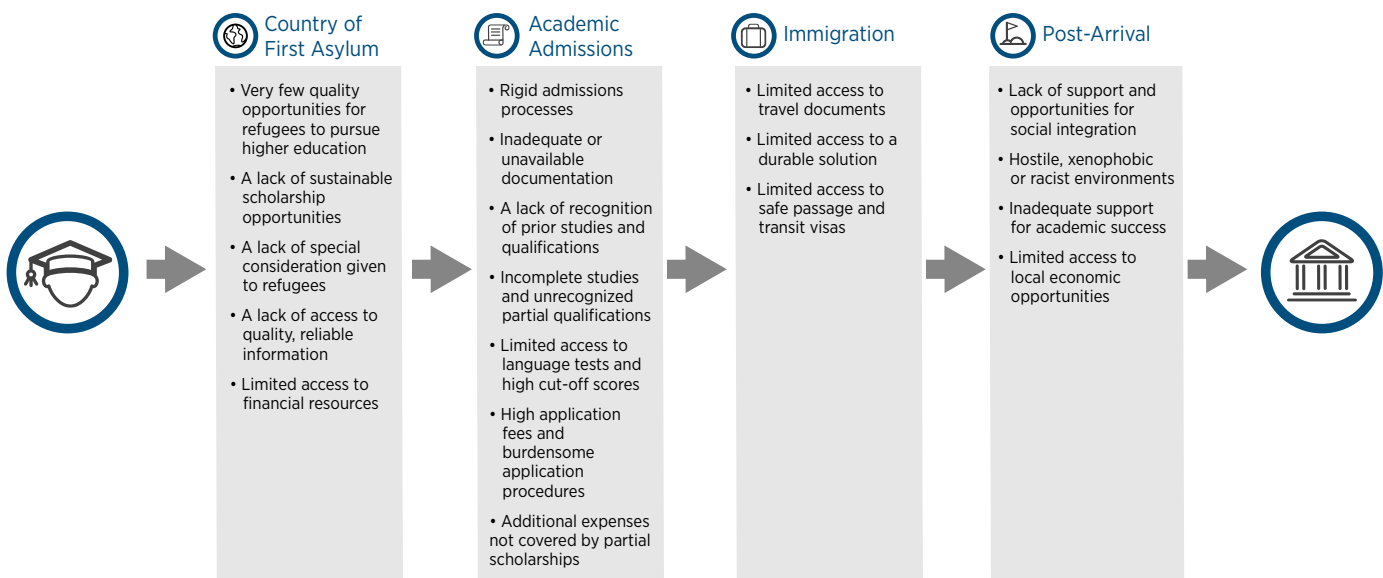


Diagram 1: The barriers refugee students face at each stage of the higher education journey.

refugees to access higher education opportunities as complementary pathways for admission with existing and emerging programs in Spain, Mexico, Portugal, France, Japan, Germany, Canada, and many others.

As education and other complementary pathway pilots emerge around the world, and alternative immigration channels to resettlement are leveraged to increase durable solutions for refugees, a key concern that arises is the lack of a durable legal status in the receiving country. When students access higher education in third countries through temporary visas, there should be guidance, support, and a clear legal pathway to a durable solution. Students should be supported to, and have the right to apply for, asylum as soon as possible.

While streamlined and expanded access to student visas, academic admissions, and scholarships are important, these routes are not always appropriate for refugees and their long-term protection needs. Refugees who arrive in a third country on a temporary visa (e.g. student visa) risk refoulement. Refugees face additional barriers related to **limited access to a durable solution** and can be left in an administrative limbo or face protection risks. Community sponsorship or humanitarian visa programs can be used to facilitate protection-appropriate admission to third countries, supporting the durability of legal stay.

Refugee students also face significant barriers related to **limited access to safe passage and transit visas** from their first country of asylum to a third country of asylum. Even with visas and immigration permissions from a third country, refugees are sometimes subject to long, arduous, expensive, and indirect journeys through countries that require transit visas. In some cases, refugees are unable to obtain safe passage at all. Close coordination between all partners to an education pathway program is needed to ensure that refugee students have support to organize and undertake safe, direct passage to the third country.

THE STUDENT REFUGEE PROGRAM: A DURABLE SOLUTION

The SRP combines refugee resettlement with opportunities for higher education in Canada. The SRP supports over 140 students per year through active partnerships with nearly 100 university and college campuses across the country. Since 1978, the SRP has supported over 2,000 young refugees to resettle to Canada and continue their studies.

The SRP operates through Canada's private refugee sponsorship program, enabling student groups to work with WUSC to sponsor refugees to their campuses. WUSC selects refugee students, prepares them for life in Canada, and supports a student network across Canada to sponsor in WUSC's name.

Crucial to the program's success is its unique youth-to-youth sponsorship model which empowers young Canadian students to play an active role in the sponsorship of refugee students. This includes raising sustainable funds for ongoing refugee sponsorships (often through student levies) and raising awareness about forced displacement and the role of Canadians in responding to this global challenge on their campuses and in their communities.²⁰



France. Muhammad, 21, spent several years in Jordan, having fled the war in Syria. Awarded a scholarship by a regional government in southern France and with the support of the Paris-based NGO Olive Branch: Democracy and Mutual Aid in Syria, he will soon begin studying at the University Paul Valery in Montpellier. © UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

Post-arrival

Refugee students who are in a third country for their studies may face challenges even after safe arrival in their place of study. One barrier for refugees and other newcomers, especially when entering a society very different from their own, is **a lack of support and opportunities for social integration**. Without adequate social and emotional support, it can be difficult for refugees to adapt to their new environments. Higher education institutions and student groups can play an integral role in providing social and emotional support for refugees and linkages with host communities. This can help ease the process of navigating a new environment, support mental health and resiliency, and help refugees build a new network and community. Additionally, connections between refugee and host communities can have a transformative impact on communities, social cohesion, and the creation of more welcoming societies.

Students may also arrive to face **hostile, xenophobic, or racist environments** in third country host communities and school environments. Higher education institutions and community partners should utilise their resources, expertise, and networks to support refugee students to find their place in a safe and inclusive community, which can be a lifeline in hostile and exclusionary environments. Institutions and student groups can also be supported to educate and sensitize host and academic communities on refugee issues and access to education. Student networks are often at the forefront of advocating for the systemic changes and can create the momentum necessary to sustain supportive and inclusive institutions and policies.

Education pathways should also pursue partnerships to ensure that refugee students are well-supported, including on the individual level. For example, refugee students may benefit from mental health support and services to bolster their overall wellbeing, ability to integrate, and academic performance.

Students may also require support to successfully transition to their new academic environment, yet there is often **inadequate support for academic success**.

Promising Practice

- ▶ Student Action for Refugees (STAR) has engaged students on more than half of the United Kingdom’s higher education campuses to support the integration of refugees, advocate for their rights—particularly the right to education—and raise awareness on refugees and asylees on campus and in surrounding communities.²¹
- ▶ Japan Association for Refugees (JAR) provides legal assistance, community-based services, and job placement assistance, as well as a suite of social support including health, food, and housing for asylum-seekers and refugees.²²

Additional academic services and support to students (e.g. writing support) provided by the host universities and colleges can be an important tool for the smooth integration of refugee students. It is important to ensure that refugees understand and can access these services, and can obtain regular and ongoing academic support that is tailored to their unique needs.

Depending on the legal status of a refugee student in a third country, the local social and economic integration opportunities available to them can be vastly different. Often, there is **limited access to local economic opportunities**. The right to work and access to placements and internships can optimize the academic experience, promote integration, and can be a requirement for graduation in some countries. Wherever possible, refugee students should have the right to work and access to local economic opportunities alongside their peers. Work-study, part time work, or internships also provide refugees with opportunities to develop skills and the work experience needed to succeed and become self-reliant after graduation.

PROGRAM DESIGN ELEMENTS

There are several program design elements to consider when developing higher education programs that support complementary pathways for admission of refugees in third countries.²³ The Paris Meeting highlighted the importance of the following key elements in designing solutions that can begin to meet the needs and aspirations of refugees.



Partnerships and coordination are essential to deliver impactful education pathways. While individual university and college scholarships are valuable in creating opportunities for refugees to continue their studies in safety, broader coordination and partnerships between diverse actors in third countries, countries of asylum, and multilateral organizations, are key to building momentum for systemic solutions and greater scale. Partners may include existing secondary and higher education institutions and initiatives, bodies who can facilitate safe transit, embassies, governments, credential assessment organizations, and national and international education associations.



Protection and dignity must be at the core of any initiative to support refugees. Opening further legal pathways for refugees to access third country opportunities should not jeopardize their right to seek asylum or the protection afforded to refugees under international law. Rather, these pathways should be designed to be a progressive approach to solutions, offering refugees more choice, safety and stability, and agency in their lives. Specifically, education pathways should ensure the safe transit of students, a legal right to remain in third countries, and facilitated access to an asylum process.



Refugees need to have **access to legal status, family unity, documentation, and an option to legally remain in the third country after graduation**. This includes support to obtain the necessary travel documents and the possibility for the refugee to legally remain in the third country after completion of the education program.



The development and design of education pathways should **meaningfully include and empower refugees**, in particular refugee youth and women. Refugees have the experience, skills, and knowledge to effectively design and be part of developing solutions, policies, and education pathways. Higher education institutions and other actors can support and facilitate refugee leadership within the design, development, and delivery of initiatives.



Third country education opportunities should reflect the **principle of additionality**. They operate in tandem with resettlement, but are additional to resettlement. Third country education opportunities should reduce the barriers that are preventing refugees from accessing existing opportunities and channels, create new channels, and ultimately result in a net increase in the number of third country solutions for refugees.



Education programs should include measures for **transparency and equity** to ensure that opportunities can be as inclusive and expansive as possible, and to ensure fairness and safety for refugees in this process. Opportunities can be shared through multiple methods, with criteria for selection that results in access for those with different genders, nationalities, abilities, identities, experiences, and fields of study.



Higher education opportunities should be **context-specific and flexible**, taking into account the interests and situation of refugees, including specific educational and learning needs, accommodations, and desires. Initiatives should consider flexible approaches to admissions, including where documentation is missing or incomplete or where language benchmarks are a challenge.



Building solutions that are **systemic, sustainable, and predictable** will ensure more refugees are attaining durable solutions through them. Through greater partnership, states, higher education institutions, international organisations, and private sector actors can demonstrate scale to institutionalize sustained and predictable opportunities and support for refugee students.



To ensure that these initiatives are a success, **engage host community students and communities**. Local communities and students should be involved in the development and planning for education pathways programs to the greatest extent possible. Community ownership can help to minimize perceptions of refugee students as a threat or unwelcome. Higher education institutions should build strong partnerships with student groups and support campus engagement, public awareness and refugee and host community integration.



University of Ottawa and Carleton University students welcome a new cohort of refugee students resettled to Canada through the SRP in 2015
© WUSC

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As people continue to be displaced from their homes and communities, at a large scale and for extended periods of time, there is a need for new and more ambitious approaches, actors, partnerships, and solutions. Third country higher education pathways for refugees can expand the solutions available to refugees and can be designed to contribute to more predictable responsibility-sharing, while also empowering refugees and enabling their self-reliance in ways that benefit host communities and higher education institutions as well.

The global higher education community is well-placed to meaningfully respond to the refugee crisis and demonstrate significant leadership. Higher education solutions in third countries can support both the education and future skills development of refugees, as well as increasing their opportunities to access a durable solution.

There is a need for significant investments in the systems and infrastructure that support third country education opportunities for refugees globally. Higher education networks—including students—can play an important leadership role in activating this potential and breaking down existing barriers. In order to significantly expand third country education opportunities for refugees, there is a need to change and revise existing laws and policies that are currently preventing refugees from accessing education pathways. Immigration systems and higher education institutions need to be flexible and take into consideration the unique needs of students with refugee backgrounds. Where there are existing and emerging community refugee sponsorship programs, higher education institutions should be engaged at the outset to explore ways in which they can expand sponsorships to create additional higher education opportunities for refugees.

The Paris Meeting represents an important milestone in the committed effort and focused dialogue among diverse stakeholders working at the juncture of higher education and durable solutions for refugees. This report reflects the wealth of knowledge on barriers, good examples, and key considerations among participants at the Paris Meeting, where the commitment to collective action and partnerships on complementary pathways was evident. Further exploration and demonstration of the principles outlined here is needed to significantly scale and expand quality higher education opportunities and complementary pathways for refugees to third countries.

Following the Paris Meeting, a **Task Force on education as a complementary pathway to admission in third countries** will be launched in line with UNHCR's Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways. The task force will be responsible for the global promotion, relevance, and advancement of higher education opportunities as a complementary pathway for admission. The task force will continue to come together, bringing in new actors and sharing information, key learnings, and best practices with interested parties. The task force will provide an opportunity for various stakeholders to effectively learn from one another in order to build, develop, advance, and advocate for refugees to access meaningful education opportunities and protection, through safe legal complementary third country admission channels.

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