



CONFERENCE

18TH – 19TH JUNE 2019
BERLIN



CONCEPT NOTE

RESEARCH AND DATA

19th June 2019, 14h00 to 15h15

Format

The four panellists will provide brief inputs touching up on one or several of the framing questions illustrated by concrete examples of their research work. The moderator will facilitate a brief discussion among the panellists and the audience before participants will brainstorm in pairs on possible answers to the leading questions. This will be followed by the group discussion of the main insights thus gained.

The objective is to suggest inputs for the conference outcome document highlighting knowledge gaps and opportunities for future research and data collection, concerning actions in the framework of the [Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF) in the area of higher education and transition to employment and related issues.

In Brief

This workshop on research and data will address three related issues.

First, **the workshop will review our knowledge and data, as well as knowledge gaps and data gaps, on refugee and forced displacement issues with regard to the access and inclusion in higher education.**

The relevant issue concerning refugee and displaced individuals include the transitions into higher education, outcomes in higher education, transition to employment, social engagement and leadership roles, the achievement of self-reliance, and special needs. Further issues at the community and national levels are institutional capacities, rights and legal aspects, gender issues, cultural norms, policy and legal barriers, conflict and emergencies, education quality, the role of host communities, location and context, and language or refugee community background.

Second, **the workshop identifies opportunities and priorities for closing knowledge and data gaps** to inform more effective humanitarian and development programming, funding and policy development as well as planning of higher education institutions to support more refugees to achieve a higher education degree and employment. Better knowledge and better data are of course key for evidence-based policies to support displaced and refugee communities and their access to higher education, employment and self-reliance.

Third, the workshop will discuss the opportunities and challenges for a **global academic network** committed to engaging with refugee and forced migration research as well as advancing teaching about, for, and by refugees. The unique opportunity in the context of higher education is that this sector is well placed to play a strategic role in investigating in a rigorous way its own functioning and performance. Furthermore, we will highlight the special role and impact of refugee and displaced populations, and specifically of **refugee and displaced students and researchers** themselves, in shaping this research agenda, aiming to identify ways to promote ethical and inclusive approaches for research and data collection and dissemination.



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Background

Academic data collection and research will be important in informing and monitoring progress towards achieving the aims and pledges to the GCR with regard to higher education and transition to employment to achieve self-reliance for young, highly educated refugee men and women. There remain **significant data gaps and corresponding knowledge gaps** in this field and there is hence a critical need for both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected. Given the particular circumstances of refugee and displaced populations, **methodologies may need adapting**.

Recognizing the role that research plays in articulating, understanding and responding to refugee and displacement issues, trends and solutions, Paragraph 43 of the GCR commits to the establishment of a

“global academic network on refugee, forced displacement and statelessness issues, 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”.

The GCR highlights three aspects that are relevant to its implementation:

- a) engagement in a whole-of-society approach;
- b) evidence-based planning and implementation; and
- c) the use and generation of “reliable, comparable, and timely data” by the stakeholders.

As a specific measure to support this, UNHCR and the World Bank created the World Bank–UNHCR Joint Data Centre in 2018. The Centre aims to improve statistics on refugees, other displaced people and host communities in order to contribute to improving policy and practice in addressing specifically protracted refugee situations. This is in line with the data initiative under the umbrella of the Sustainable Development Agenda, which also explicitly mentions forcibly displaced populations.

In the area of education, UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics (UIS), with which UNHCR has a partnership agreement, leads the data initiative on SDG 4 on education. The **availability of data is critical for example for learning, planning, funding, institutional capacity considerations, and advocacy**. Currently, data management and sharing on refugee higher education needs a more effective approach.

The investment in higher education and in scholarship programmes, in particular, come with assumptions that highly educated refugee women and men will have increased employment opportunities, will be advocates for rights and equality, will engage in local initiatives and community development or will – when a return is safe – help to rebuild their home countries. These and other **assumptions need further empirical research** to inform programme development. While the barriers to access to higher education are more or less well known, more solid information is needed, for example, on the post-graduation period and what influences perspectives, decisions and motivation of refugee youth to pursue higher education or not as well as decisions after graduation.

Framing Questions

The workshop will address and discuss three framing questions. Participants will be encouraged to consider known and new approaches, partnerships and proposals that respond to short-term data needs and longitudinal evidence base needs from qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods perspectives. The focus



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will be on academic forms of learning aimed to provide ‘public good’ knowledge accessible to all stakeholders.

The discussions will be of relevance to and can support the upcoming Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2019. This in turn aims to work with partners to advance the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) commitments in a more effective, joint, equitable and evidence-based manner at the global, regional and national level.

1. **What do we know and what do we not know about refugees, displaced people and higher education? And what data currently exists to enable such research?**

We will review the current state of the art of knowledge about higher education for refugees and displaced people, sketching the priority knowledge gaps and areas for further research and learning to enable evidence-based policy making and programme design. We will also ask which areas of refugee or forced migration research related to higher education are under-prioritized or under-funded. Critically, we will discuss existing data, reviewing if it is available for research and learning (and to whom). We will also identify remaining data gaps, paying attention to different types of data.

2. **What are opportunities and priorities for closing knowledge and data gaps?**

Once we have identified our collective knowledge and knowledge gaps on the topic of discussion, we will advance by outlining opportunities and priorities for closing both knowledge and data gaps. We will consider how gaps could be tackled, what constraints may need to be overcome in the process and how the sector can contribute to empower academia to create this knowledge. For example, we will differentiate between data that does not exist and data that may exist but is currently not available for research or simply not being utilized yet. We will discuss what academia can do to push the knowledge frontier and what support academia needs to fulfil this mission. We will consider if there is anything missing in the relationship between humanitarian and/or policymakers and researchers, which would help creating further knowledge.

3. **What is the potential for a global academic network in research and data collection – and how can refugees and displaced people play an active role in research?**

In the concluding part of the discussion we will review the potential for connection different actors internationally in a global academic network, including with the active participation of refugees and displaced people themselves. We will consider the principle “*not talk about us without us*”. We will discuss what agency refugees and displaced communities play in formulating research agendas, conducting research and drawing conclusions about forcibly displaced persons. We will also consider how can we ensure research does no harm, both in reducing feelings amongst communities of being “a constant subject of research”, and/or in the tensions that are created when academics play a dual role of researcher and education provider.



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Moderator

- **Professor Tilman Brück** is an economist and peace researcher. He is the Founder and Director of the Berlin-based ISDC - International Security and Development Center (www.isdc.org), a Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and a Co-Director of the Households in Conflict Network (www.hicn.org). His main research interest is the behaviour and welfare of individuals and households in conflict-affected, insecure and fragile areas and in humanitarian emergencies.

Speakers

- **Dr. Kerry Bystrom**, Associate Dean, Bard College Berlin, Germany
- **Dr. David Hollow**, Senior Lead Researcher, jigsaw-consult, UK
- **Dr. Steffen Beigang**, Research associate at Dezim research institute (German Center for integration and migration research) and member of the BIM-Project "Discrimination experiences" in Germany", Germany
- **Innocent Ntumba Tshilombo**, Refugee Researcher and Scholar based in Kakuma who has co-published several articles with the University of Geneva, Kenya

Rapporteur

- **Kathrin Schmid**, Advisor at the Regional Project Sport for Development in Africa at the GIZ GmbH and Carlo Schmid Fellow who did research on volunteer work of DAFI students, Germany

Background Reading

- Jigsaw Consult. December 2016. Higher education for refugees in low resource environments: landscape review. ([PDF, English](#))