



CONFERENCE

18TH – 19TH JUNE 2019
BERLIN



CONCEPT NOTE

HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT

19th June 2019, 14h00 to 15h15

Format

Three speakers will kick off the workshop session by introducing a good practice and stating what works and what doesn't followed by discussions in smaller groups. The moderator will facilitate the session and a rapporteur will summarise the results.

In Brief

Supporting refugee self-reliance is one of the core objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Providing access to higher education and expanding or creating economic opportunities for economic inclusion are central to achieving this. This workshop examines existing approaches to facilitating refugee students and graduates to transition from university to employment and explores opportunities to support them manage challenges they do face in navigating the labour market and the post-graduation period more generally. In this workshop representatives from the private, academic, labour, civil society, and development sectors address questions related to competencies and skills, labour laws and policies, postgraduate opportunities and collaboration among various actors.

Background

The GCR aims to ease pressures on host countries and enhance refugee self-reliance. Key to achieving these objectives is the expanded participation of refugees in the labour market and in local economies. Unleashing the potential of refugees through supporting their access to higher education is crucial for their **self-reliance** as well as for **sustainable, peaceful development** of the countries that have welcomed them or to those they return to. **Restrictive labour policies** or lack of access to decent jobs 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.

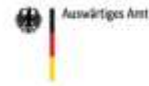
As a growing number of scholarship programmes for refugees strive to support refugees in achieving self-reliance, measures to improve the economic inclusion and realize the right to work are essential to harnessing the benefits in higher education and training made by refugees, institutions, States and partners. Therefore, strategies, research and analysis on economic inclusion should consider highly educated refugees. Good practices and pledges in this area of work at the Global Refugee Forum will also contribute to advance the GCR objectives regarding higher education.

Recognising prior non-formal and informal learning, providing **career guidance** and **work skills training** are important to enhance refugee participation in higher education and to ease their entry into labour markets



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through employment or entrepreneurship. Usually, first work experiences are required in addition to a degree in order to be considered for positions. These may be gained through intern- or traineeships during the study programme. Depending on the country context, this may or may not be a challenge for refugee students. Still, restrictions to the **right to work**, **language** requirements, the overall **employment situation** in the host country or **knowledge and attitudes of employers towards refugees** may impede the **transition to employment after graduation**.

The DAFI programme aims to prepare and support students before and shortly after graduation to find employment. Today about half of the DAFI programmes have taken up concrete measure such as targeted training to do this. UNHCR and its local partners have advanced (this varies country by country) three components in its DAFI programme: supporting DAFI students (i) to find an internship, (ii) to engage in the community and volunteer with local partners and (iii) to prepare for the job market. This requires UNHCR and its partners to **work with local enterprises and organisations** to facilitate refugee students to get an internship and graduates to be considered for positions. The DAFI programme also aims to facilitate **DAFI students' engagement in volunteering activities in their communities** with local partner organisations. This has already shown to be effective in terms of gaining community development experience and work skills in some DAFI programme countries. These efforts depend on the country context, local capacities and priorities.

Good practice example 1

In Pakistan, the [Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit \(GIZ\) GmbH](#) through their [Refugee Management Support Programme](#) implements the **DAFI Plus programme** in partnership with UNHCR. The programme comprises three components: **(i)** connecting refugee students receiving a DAFI scholarship in Pakistan with the formal job market, **(ii)** training educated refugee youth who were not selected for a DAFI scholarship in essential work skills and **(iii)** increasing the number of young women with a DAFI scholarship. The first component is a good example of how international partners and local agencies and employers can work together to enable refugee graduates to gain professional experience, invaluable for future job applications. Three major local recruitment agencies facilitate on-the-job traineeships at private, public and non-profit sector organisations. The DAFI scholars selected for the placement had participated in "Learning for Earning" training before they started their traineeships which focused on improved skills in communication, negotiation, IT, time management, CV development, job interviews, and career planning.

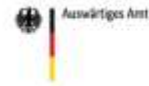
Good practice example 2

UNHCR and the [United Nations Volunteer \(UNV\) Programme](#) partner in Sub-Saharan Africa to deploy DAFI graduates as national UNVs in UN agencies, national institutions or NGOs. Piloted with 14 students in Ghana and Senegal, the project has proven an effective pathway for highly educated and motivated refugees to gain relevant work experience while earning an income from six months to four years and benefitting from entitlements such as additional training or health insurance. Refugee UNVs currently work in areas such as project development, finance, communications and human resources with different UN agencies.



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Framing Questions

The workshop aims to facilitate discussion and exchange on current practices and experiences on what works and what doesn't in creating and expanding lawful employment and economic opportunities for graduated refugees. Some questions that will help to frame the discussions are:

- 1. Beyond scholarships:** How can scholarship programmes be improved to ease access to the local labour market? What are existing good practices to help refugee graduates or national graduates enter the labour market? How can scholarship programmes help to close gender inequalities in finding employment?
- 2. Enabling environment:** How can we better facilitate policy decisions and policy reform around the integration of refugee graduates in the labour market in the context of the right to work? How can we better inform and work with local employers to welcoming refugees in the jobs they create? How can we better promote the inclusion of highly educated refugees in entrepreneurship, start-up and employment programmes planned and provided by international and national economic development programmes and strategies? What role can the private sector play to allow more refugees to pursue lawful employment?
- 3. Role of universities:** What role can universities play to improve the transition from education to employment for refugees? What do universities already do? Are refugees proactively invited and included in job market fairs? Are higher education study programmes designed to provide students with the set of skills needed at the job market? How can we ensure the quality of higher education programmes so graduates meet the needs of the 21st-century job market?

Moderator

Amanda Kelleher, Director, International Education at Luminus, Jordan

Speakers

Farzeen Khan, Technical Expert, DAFI Plus Programme, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Pakistan

Marie N'Dou, DAFI alumni and United Nations Volunteer with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ghana

Rapporteur

Franziska Hirschelmann, Chief Operating Officer at jobs4refugees, Germany

Suggested Reading

- UNHCR. 2018. [The Other One Percent – Refugee Students in Higher Education. DAFI Annual Report 2017](#), p. 47-52
- GIZ GmbH. 2017. Refugee Higher Education and Employability. ([PDF](#))