

Protection considerations for higher education programmes for refugees: Experiences from DAFI scholarships

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UNHCR'S mandate

Under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees:

UNHCR's mandate is to protect and assist governments in finding solutions for refugees

- Ensuring protection for people of concern
- Assisting Governments to find durable solutions
- Providing for basic needs

A photograph of three young girls in a classroom. The girl in the center is wearing a red headscarf and a grey patterned dress, looking towards the right. The girl on the left is wearing a white headscarf and looking down at a notebook. The girl on the right is wearing a red headscarf and looking down at a notebook. They are all sitting at a desk with papers and a notebook.

Forced displacement in 2014

59.5 million forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations

14.4 million refugees under UNHCR's protection

38.2 million IDPs

51% of all refugees are under 18

Over 4.8 million Syrian refugees in host countries in the region (May 2016)



UNHCR Education Strategy 2012-2016

Action 4: More young people will follow higher education courses

Contribution of higher education

- ***Higher education for refugees empowers individuals, communities and societies***
 - Providing meaningful education opportunities for youth
 - Reducing economic vulnerability and improving livelihoods
 - Reinforcing social and gender equality
 - Providing role models and strengthening protection mechanisms
 - Contributing to long-term solutions & post-conflict reconstruction

DAFI scholarship programme

- Initiated and primarily funded by Germany since 1992
- Sustainable growth: 2,300 higher education scholarships for refugees in 40 host countries in 2015
- TOP-5 subjects of study: business & commerce, medical & health, pedagogics, engineering, mathematics & IT
- Largest student populations: Afghans, Somali, Congolese, Sudanese, Syrians – 43% female students
- 200 new scholarships for Syrian refugees in 2015



Expansion of the DAFI programme

Additional support to DAFI by Germany in 2016:

- 1,700 new scholarships for Syrian refugees
 - Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq
- 560 new scholarships to Sub-Saharan Africa
 - Somali, Congolese, Sudanese and other refugee groups
- 300 new scholarships for Afghan refugees
- Close collaboration with the HOPES programme



Demand for higher education: UNHCR experience



- Globally, <1% refugees have access to higher education
- Selection for DAFI scholarships highly competitive:
 - Demonstration of demand among Syrians: 5,803 applications for 70 scholarships in Turkey (2015).
 - High needs among other refugee groups: 723 applications for 10 scholarships in Uganda (2014).
- Demand continuously increasing across regions
- Refugees who have completed secondary or interrupted tertiary education

Challenges

- Access to documentation and information
- Recognition of previous studies
- Cost of study and life
- Language and social environment
- Psychosocial: trauma, separation from family
- Various legal, administrative, academic, economic and social challenges affecting access and retention

Considerations for higher education programmes

- Protection and legal status of refugee students
 - Clarity in legal status of utmost importance – ***non-refoulement***
 - Host country vs. 3rd country scholarships
 - Visa type, right to work, prospects after graduation?
- Admission procedures
 - Recognition of certificates by universities/authorities
 - Selection criteria: how to promote inclusive and non-discriminatory access to higher education?

Considerations for higher education programmes (2)

- Sustainability of scholarships
 - Coverage of whole cycle of studies, such as Bachelor degree
- Language, academic and psychosocial support
 - Academic and social networks, peer support groups
- Programme preparation and coordination
 - Ministries/ authorities, universities, other stakeholders
- Communication and outreach to applicants
 - Management of expectations



Thank you!
Questions and comments?

