

**ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOS  
28 – 30 JUNE 2011, International Conference Center Geneva**

**Background Paper  
Side meeting: Distance Learning: A window of opportunity**

*Tuesday 28 June 2011, 13:00 - 14:00, Room 5*

**Education for All:  
Provision of Portable Higher Education for Long-Term Refugees**

**The Issue**

The provision of higher education for long-term refugees such that supports the production of the higher-order capacity necessary for promoting peace, security and development in the Global South is emerging as a crucial form of development assistance. While the above-mentioned benefits of higher education for refugees in countries of origin and host countries are well-documented, solutions for effective delivery that can reach significant numbers of refugees are few. To date, international scholarships to travel to institutions in the Global North remain the predominant scheme to address the need for higher education for only a negligible few (about one percent). Recognizing the important and vital link between higher education and durable solutions (i.e., voluntary repatriation to the home country; local integration in the country of asylum; resettlement to a third country) international agencies have called for action, yet to be matched by effective solutions. Despite the technological advancements made in education service delivery internationally, poor countries of asylum such as Kenya, that host a significant number of long-term refugees, currently lack sufficient capacity to provide on-line and on-site degree programs that allow the realization of education as a right for this excluded group. Multi-stakeholders' cutting edge initiatives that will offer higher education opportunities to refugees *in situ* despite contexts of conflict, violence and exile are imperative.

**Goal and Objectives**

Informed by participatory action research (PAR), the proposed partnership explores ways to meet educational concerns of displaced populations. The project will focus on Dadaab Kenya (DC-K), where a group of three camps comprise one of the largest refugee clusters in the world, hosting 350,000 refugees from Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia, in addition to forced migrants from other areas in Kenya. Our goal is to study access to and impacts of education for long-term refugees through on-line/on-site courses and degree, diploma and certificate programs. Through the mobilization of a North-South multi-stakeholder network and based on the outcome of research that probes the consequences of protracted refugee situations, we aim to achieve the following objectives: (1) to analyze the needs, openings and obstacles to delivering portable skills to refugees who are not 'at home' and determine the best way of providing tertiary education for refugees based on the contextual needs of refugee youth; (2) to explore models that support participation of refugee populations in tertiary education.

**Project Duration**

2 years starting April 2011.

**Outputs, outcomes and impacts**

**Output:** The partnership will produce participatory action research reports organized around two key themes: (1) needs and challenges for tertiary education provision to long-term refugees; and (2) models of appropriate tertiary education service delivery for long-term refugees. The products will serve as a strong knowledge base for a planned pilot project which will begin to deliver portable university degree, diploma and certificate programs to refugees in the Dadaab camps by 2013-14. It is expected that close to 200 refugees and local Kenyan youth will benefit directly. Our multi-method dissemination of findings through three workshops, project website and publications will introduce knowledge about transformative processes that use partnerships in socially innovative ways to address pressing economic, social and cultural challenges, such as those related to preparing a higher-order capacity for development among refugee populations.

**Outcomes:** Overall, the proposed research partnership will further our understanding of: (1) the nature, dynamics and challenges of the provision of tertiary education for long term refugees and forced migrants; and (2) the pedagogy needed in the development and delivery of on-line, technologically enhanced, distance and/or face-to-face courses to remote areas, including the process of supporting students' empowerment, through imparting and facilitating knowledge production. A related outcome will be awareness raising of national and international research and policy making audiences towards the mobilization of tertiary education for long-term refugees.

**Impacts:** This research will contribute to improved access to education for long-term refugees , thus leading to the realization of the crucial human right of access to higher education, improved employability and contributions to peace and stability in the region.

**Partners**

This Partnership brings together researchers and practitioners from Canada, Kenya and international networks, who are committed to increasing our knowledge concerning the provision of tertiary/higher education for refugees. It offers an opportunity to increase local capacity to provide higher education for refugees, and to promote the exchange of innovative practices in delivery of higher education for an excluded group, whose human rights are yet to be realized in several sub-Saharan African states affected by conflict in their respective regions, including Kenya. Partners include: York University, Canada (Centre for Refugee Studies, International Development Studies Graduate Program and Centre for the Support of Teaching), Kenyatta University, African Virtual University, Windle Trust Kenya, UNHCR Dadaab, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, The International Rescue Committee and The World University Service of Canada.