

Global Refugee Forum 2019 Template for Good Practices

Please send this template and any attachments to the Global Refugee Forum Coordination Team at hqgrf@unhcr.org **as early as possible** to facilitate the consolidation and presentation of good practices in time for the Global Refugee Forum.

Good practices can be shared on the Global Refugee Forum website and then included in the digital portal, which is currently under development.

Please complete a separate template for each good practice.

Name of entity sharing good practice

WUSC - World University Service of Canada

Name and position of contact person

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Partners

WUSC works in partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the Government of Québec, Windle Trust Kenya and Uganda, UNHCR, and Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) in Malawi, and with more than 95 post-secondary institutions across Canada – including universities, colleges, and CEGEPs – among other partners.

Name of good practice

Student Refugee Program (SRP) - Building Sustainable Solutions for refugees through Education based on a youth-led peer-to-peer support model.

Country/ Region:

Based in Canada, WUSC works in over 25 countries across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas. See: <https://wusc.ca/work/>. For SRP, WUSC accepts applications only from the following countries of asylum: **Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda.**

Year(s) of implementation and duration:

Since 1978 under Canada's Private Sponsorship for Refugees Program, since the 1940s using a different immigration mechanism

Document related to the good practice model/approach:

Attached Available at:

<https://wusc.ca/building-educational-pathways-for-refugees-mapping-a-canadian-peer-to-peer-support-model/>

General description of the good practice:

The Student Refugee Program is the only one to combine [private sponsorship refugee admission](#) with opportunities for higher education and integration. Launched in 1978 the program has since grown to support over 130 students per year through active partnerships with over 95 campuses.

As an official Sponsorship Agreement Holder in Canada, WUSC has a longstanding agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. This agreement enables us to bring refugee students to study in Canada as permanent residents. WUSC identifies refugee students and grants permission to WUSC Local Committees at universities, colleges and cegeps 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. The [Local Committees](#) raise funds and awareness for the program on their campus and in their community. They also play a critical role in offering day-to-day social and academic support to SRP students.

Going beyond resettlement, the SRP also provides an innovative pathway to integration for young refugees. A 2007 study found that 97 percent of sponsored students had completed or were in the process of completing their post-secondary program with many intending to further their education. The vast majority – 85 percent – had found work in their chosen fields after graduation.

Main activities of the good practice:

The SRP operates under Canada's PSR Program, which enables WUSC to select refugee students, recognized by UNHCR, in their country of asylum and match them with sponsoring WUSC Local Committees at post-secondary institutions in Canada. The WUSC Local Committees at universities, colleges, and CEGEPs across Canada then sponsor under WUSC's agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the sponsors. These Local Committees and their post-secondary institutions take on the costs of education and settlement of sponsored refugee students for their first year in Canada, and provide essential integration support.

To facilitate the selection, preparation, and immigration of students, WUSC relies on the cooperation of many international partners, including IRCC, the UNHCR, a variety of government ministries in the refugees' host country, local NGOs, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In most cases, WUSC also works in collaboration with its own overseas offices, which provide local oversight to the SRP program in addition to carrying out other development programs.

Results of the good practice:

Since the Student Refugee Program began operating in its current format under Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program, the SRP has enabled more than 1,900 refugee youth to continue their post-secondary education in a safe and secure environment. In August 2019 the number is expected to surpass that of 2000 persons.

Former refugee students, in turn, become ambassadors for the refugee response on their campus and beyond, as they provide insight to fellow Canadians into the challenges facing those forcibly displaced globally.

WUSC is now seeking to share their experience and promote their model to other countries to support the expansion of complementary pathways for admission for refugees through education and student to student sponsorship. With thousands of Canadian youth volunteers engaged, WUSC is working to expand into other models of community sponsorship.

Challenges in implementing the good practice and how they are being addressed:

- 1. Academic transition** of students to new academic environments, and challenges related to studying in their non-native language that are bridged through pre-departure language and skills (e.g. computer) courses, but have varying degree of success, depending on the individual capacity and skills of each student.
- 2. Gender parity:** WUSC implements large-scale programming at lower levels of education to improve retention rates and education outcomes of girls and other particularly marginalized groups. It has also adapted its programming to allow for lower minimum academic requirements for girls for admission.
- 3. Admissions and Access:** need to ensure that typical required documentation for admission, and in some cases, when they do not meet the minimum criteria of the school are waved. Close collaboration with UNHCR, IOM, our embassies abroad, and the host-country government is needed to ensure the **TIMELY** arrival of students in August, for classes in September. Delays in obtaining exit visas can mean the need to postpone students for a full year.
- 4. Sustainability:** Because students are on campus for only 2 - 4 years, turnover is high. WUSC works with campuses to "institutionalize" the program, and embed it within an existing department.
- 5. Xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments:** Student volunteer groups are responsible for raising awareness, and engaging their campus communities in dialogue about forced migration issues. They are supported by staff to design activities and events, and to take action.