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Business for Peace in Indonesia: University Scholarships for Afghan and Palestinian Refugees and Their Role in Community Development

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Abstract

This article examines the role of university scholarship programs in Indonesia as a form of "business for peace," focusing specifically on their impact on Afghan and Palestinian refugees. The primary aim of the article is to explore how Indonesian higher education institutions, particularly private universities, contribute to community development and social responsibility through the inclusion of refugee students. Using a qualitative approach, the study analyzes scholarship initiatives implemented by select Indonesian universities and assesses their broader social implications. The findings suggest that such initiatives not only provide educational opportunities for displaced populations but also foster intercultural understanding, institutional responsibility, and local community engagement. However, the study also highlights the limited involvement of public policy and the dominant role of private sector initiatives in addressing refugee inclusion. This article contributes to ongoing discussions on refugee education, peacebuilding, and the potential of higher education as a driver of social cohesion in host countries.

Keywords

Refugee education, business for peace, higher education in Indonesia, social responsibility

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Negocios por la Paz en Indonesia: Becas Universitarias para Refugiados Afganos y Palestinos y su Papel en el Desarrollo Comunitario

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Resumen

Este artículo examina el papel de los programas de becas universitarias en Indonesia como una forma de "negocio para la paz", centrándose específicamente en su impacto en los refugiados afganos y palestinos. El objetivo principal del artículo es explorar cómo las instituciones de educación superior indonesias, en particular las universidades privadas, contribuyen al desarrollo comunitario y la responsabilidad social mediante la inclusión de estudiantes refugiados. Mediante un enfoque cualitativo, el estudio analiza las iniciativas de becas implementadas por universidades indonesias seleccionadas y evalúa sus implicaciones sociales más amplias. Los hallazgos sugieren que dichas iniciativas no solo brindan oportunidades educativas a las poblaciones desplazadas, sino que también fomentan el entendimiento intercultural, la responsabilidad institucional y la participación de la comunidad local. Sin embargo, el estudio también destaca la limitada participación de las políticas públicas y el papel dominante de las iniciativas del sector privado para abordar la inclusión de los refugiados. Este artículo contribuye a los debates en curso sobre la educación de los refugiados, la consolidación de la paz y el potencial de la educación superior como motor de la cohesión social en los países de acogida.

Palabras clave

Educación de refugiados, negocios por la paz, educación superior en Indonesia, responsabilidad social

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Providing access to higher education for international students is a multifaceted endeavor that includes significant challenges and tremendous opportunities. This is particularly evident in the context of students from conflict countries such as Afghanistan and Palestine. As a country strive to improve their educational landscape and promote global solidarity, the inclusion of students from these regions poses unique administrative, cultural, and logistical challenges. However, it also offers great opportunities to foster peace, understanding, and development. International student enrollment has become a major trend in universities around the world since the internationalization of higher education has become a major concern. The underlying reasons for providing opportunities for international student admissions in Indonesia are aimed at academic advancement, cultural exchange and the establishment of diplomatic relations. To realize this, it is necessary to have a national policy on international education that starts with building a structure that is in accordance with the country's context (Arabkheradmand et al., n.d.). Opportunities that can be taken advantage of in the interim include enhancing student's competencies, which can assist them not only improve their quality of life in the host nation but, if feasible aid in the rehabilitation of their home nation (AlKharouf et al., 2024).

Higher education for refugees is considered an important tool for integrating them into society, supporting economic growth and promoting social development. Education, and especially higher education, is seen as an important driver for assimilation or repatriation, a core component of a hopeful future for many refugees. Access to higher education for refugees is a problem caused by a variety of interrelated and increasingly complex barriers: language, social norms, economic and administrative barriers, and more (AlKharouf et al., 2024).

Although education is a basic right for every individual. In fact, for refugees in Indonesia they only have limited Access to education both at the formal education level to secondary school level. Regarding Access to education for refugee children in Indonesia, in handling by UNHCR collaborates with IOM to providing Access to formal education to their Community House. As part of the Indonesian government's commitment to upholding the educational rights of refugee children, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) issued Circular Letter No. 75253/A.A4/HK/2019 in July 2019. This letter addresses the fulfillment of the right to education for refugee children residing in Indonesia (Fatimah, 2023). With the Circular Letter issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) works in partnership with local governments to facilitate access to regular education for refugee and asylum-seeking children. This is achieved through various initiatives such as homeschooling programs, language instruction, thematic learning, early childhood education, and pathways to formal schooling. (Hasya, 2023).

There is limited research on Access to higher education for refugees in Indonesia. Existing studies generally focus more on humanitarian assistance, refugee human rights and access to basic education. Research that specifically discusses frameworks for refugees in Indonesia, especially for refugees from Afghanistan and Palestine is a still rare. Access to education is often restricted in conflict-torn countries such as Afghanistan and Palestine. The opportunity to pursue higher education for Afghan and Palestinian refugees also has a long-term impact

that has the potential to promote peace. According to UNHCR, there are around 26.6 million refugees globally and only 5 % have Access to higher education (UNHCR, 2023). Even though Indonesia provides access to basic education for refugee children through a Circular Letter of the Minister of Education, there is no national regulation that provides access to higher education for refugees. Indonesia has been committed to assisting refugees since the arrival of Vietnamese refugees between 1975 and 1980 (Adwani et al., 2021).

This commitment continues to this day with the enactment of Presidential Regulation No. 125 of 2016 concerning Handling of Refugees. Even though this Perpres, in its current framing has yet to live up to its expected application, the regulation allows access and temporary protection for refugees in Indonesia, clarified the status of refugees and asylum seekers under Indonesian law, and authorizes the UNHCR to help protect and find a solution for the refugees (Karunia, 2016). The children of refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia are regarded as victims of forced migration due to natural disasters, armed conflicts, wars, human rights abuses, and environmental and climate change. Due to their forced relocation to other host nations where their human rights have been disregarded, these difficulties have had a detrimental impact on their physical and mental well-being. According to Indonesian regulations, their entitlement to an education has been exclusive and unfair, and in practice, they have faced an educational emergency.

Children of refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia have faced difficulties attending elementary and secondary public schools due to restrictive rules or practices, much like in other Southeast Asian nations. Refugee students struggle to participate in higher education due to challenges related to accreditation of their academic documents, their classification as international students, financial constraints, navigation of entry requirements and actual day-to-day participation at the university. For refugees, the barriers they face in accessing higher education reinforce and exacerbate each other, creating difficult situations to deal with, such as language, environment and social norms (Gallagher et al., 2024). In addition to limited access, emergency conditions, exclusion and injustice in education also add to the burden experienced by refugee children in Indonesia. Refugee children experience exclusion from formal education and often have to rely on informal education institutions that are not officially recognized. The inability to attend public schools results from factors such as lack of legal documents and language barriers. This situation creates educational injustices that limit their opportunities to develop themselves and achieve a better future (Kranrattanasuit, 2023).

Providing access to higher education to refugee students provides an opportunity for Indonesia to strengthen international cooperation, both in the fields of education and humanitarianism. Scholarship and student exchange programs can be a platform to strengthen diplomatic relations with other countries. Conflict is highlighted as a barrier to education in Education in Emergencies and Crises, which also outlines a commitment to address the needs of education systems impacted by conflict, national calamity, and instability, as well as to implement education programs in ways that foster tolerance, peace, and mutual understanding, as well as to help prevent violence and conflict (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). The right to education is a basic right of human rights enforcement in the education environment. The fulfillment of this right has far-reaching implications. To realize this, meaningful equity is required for every individual. Every individual has equal opportunities in terms of

education, including the rights of asylum seekers who have opportunities at the University level of education. The need for basic rights of refugees is a shared responsibility that must be fulfilled while they are in the territory of transit countries, one of which is the right to education for asylum seekers (Rumiarta & Jayantiari, 2023). The right to education for refugees is articulated in Article 22 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the right to education in emergencies and in draft UN resolutions. The Human Rights Council on the right to education for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. In this case it is explained that:

“States Parties shall accord to refugees the best possible treatment, and in no case less favorable than the treatment accorded to aliens generally in similar circumstances, as regards education other than primary education and in particular, as regards access to studies, recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, waiver of fees and levies awarding of scholarships” (UNHCR, 1951).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is an educational, scientific and cultural organization. This organization was established in 1945 as a special agency of the United Nations for the purpose of education and science. By encouraging cooperation between countries through education, science and culture (UNESCO, 2009). UNESCO plays an important role in ensuring that refugees, including in the case of refugees in Indonesia have equal and fair access to the University level through various programs and initiatives. UNESCO not only improves the quality of life of refugees but also helps global social and economic development. With UNESCO's assistance, the Indonesian government can overcome existing challenges and maximize opportunities to provide higher education for refugees, which in turn will support sustainable peace, security and progress. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirmed that education is a basic right that must be guaranteed by every state. The right includes free and compulsory primary education and higher education accessible to all individuals. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

"Everyone has the right to education. Free education, at least for primary school level. Primary school education should be compulsory. Technical and vocational education in general should be open to all, and higher education should be accessible in the same way to all." (International Law Making, 2006)

UNESCO's legal role and policy in the 1997 Declaration on Human Rights for Peace states that investment in education is not only to respect basic rights but also to build peace and progress for the world. Education is a fundamental human right and is included in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Basically, the legal policy and role of the UN in providing the right to education for refugees is based on the provisions of Article 22 paragraph 1 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, explaining about:

"States parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who seeks refugee status or is considered a refugee in accordance with domestic law and procedures either unaccompanied or accompanied by a parent or other person, receives protection and humanitarian assistance who receives protection and humanitarian assistance." (UNICEF, 2023).

The UN through various agencies such as UNESCO and UNHCR is responsible for supporting proper and equal access to education for refugee children. UNESCO and UNHCR work together to advocate for global policies that ensure the right to education for refugees that are implemented by all countries (Astariyani et al., 2023). The policy of a country, in this case Indonesia, in providing protection to refugees and asylum seekers, especially in meeting the obligation to provide compulsory education as a fundamental but in fact, the implementation of the policy has not been perfect because Indonesia has not ratified the 1982 convention on refugees. This is due to security and economic reasons. Then this policy prioritizes national interests from the humanitarian and economic aspects which of course still respect the values of the human rights of Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

However, Indonesia still provides protection to refugees and asylum seekers, including the right to education, through domestic regulations such as the Law on Human Rights and Child Protection. Additionally, Indonesia collaborates with international organizations like UNHCR to fill gaps in educational provision for refugees. Initiatives such as community learning centers and partnerships with NGOs aim to ensure that refugee children can access at least basic education. However, the absence of a formal legal framework specifically for refugee education limits the sustainability and reach of these initiatives. For many refugees, access to formal education remains uncertain, leading to reliance on temporary and informal educational services that may not fully prepare them for future academic or professional pathways.

The long-term solutions provided in assisting refugee resettlement are at the heart of UNHCR's mission. UNHCR works to ensure that each solution is implemented taking into account the needs and human rights of refugees, as well as the political and social conditions in countries of origin and host. Effective implementation of the solutions offered requires international cooperation, inclusive policies and the continued support of various actors including governments, international organizations and civil society. (El Sayed Younes & Karkouti, 2023). Uncertain legal status affects access to higher education. Higher education policies in Indonesia may not be fully prepared to accommodate the specific needs of refugees and migrants. The process of receiving and recognizing academic qualifications from the country of origin is often complicated and inflexible. Providing access to higher education for refugees and migrants from Afghanistan and Palestine is a fundamental human right. For Indonesia, as a country with a high commitment to humanity, given the lack of financial aid and scholarship provided to refugees and migrant in Indonesia, it is challenging for refugees to access higher education. Therefore, the findings of this study can help administrators, policymakers, human rights activists and humanitarian aid agencies to formulate context-specific policies that expand educational opportunities for refugees.

Business for Peace Building

In the current global era, education has become one of the fastest growing business sectors, providing significant profits for educational institutions that are able to compete in the international market. However, the business oriented education model also opens up opportunities for refugees and immigrants from conflict countries such as Afghanistan and Palestine to continue their higher education in Indonesia University. Through partnerships with the private sector, these universities can provide scholarships and supports programs that enable refugees and immigrants to access quality education. This approach is in line with the “Business for Peace” theory, which emphasizes the important role of the private sector in promoting peace and community development in conflict affected areas. By providing access to higher education, the private sector not only contributes to individual development but also supports social stability and reconstruction in refugees home communities. This scholarship program is not only an effective marketing tool for the University but also reflects the company’s social responsibility in a broader global context (Rhoades et al., 2007). Business for peace theory highlights that the business sector has an important role to play in promoting peace and community developments, especially in conflict-affected areas. The theory argues that businesses, through their economic activities, can contribute to sustainable social and economic activities, can contribute to sustainable social and economic stability. Businesses have the unique ability to create jobs, drive economic growth and strengthen the social infrastructure that supports peace (Miklian & Schouten, 2019).

The private sector has a very important role in promoting security and sustainable development, especially through providing access to higher education for refugees and migrants. Cross-sector cooperation between business, government and civil society is essential for building peace and preventing or resolving conflict. In addition to the role in conflict prevention, the private sector can also make a significant contribution to post-conflict reconstruction, such partnerships can be valuable mechanism to address policy issues, mobilize resources and increase mutual trust and understanding between different groups in conflict-affected or potentially conflict-affected areas (Fort, 2016). Through these collaborations, education programs for refugees and migrants can be more effective and long-term, as they leverage the strengths and resources of different parties to create NGO’s and companies to provide scholarships, while government can support through policies that facilitate access to education for refugees (Wright, 2004).

In Indonesia, cross-sector collaboration or Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP) is essential to ensure access to education for refugee children. Various actors such as UNHCR, Dompot Dhuafa, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and a number of private parties work together with MSP to support refugee education through class preparation, homeschooling, and access to university. One example of this initiative is the preparation class held by UNHCR in collaboration with Dompot Dhuafa and Inisiatif Orang, and homeschooling for refugee children living in detention centers supported by IOM Indonesia (Suwartiningsih, 2022). The cooperation of multiple parties is necessary for Indonesia to undertake inclusive education for child refugees. In Multi-Stakeholder partnerships. Additional actors like Dompot Dhuafa also assist efforts for inclusive education for child refugees. This group work with UNHCR Indonesia to offer refugees financial and

educational support (Muthohar, 2020). This collaboration UNHCR Indonesia with Dompot Dhuafa as a non-profit organization to support refugees in the areas of health, education, and refugee empowerment. Providing scholarship opportunities to students by giving them the opportunity to continue their studies at Universitas. Several Universities in Indonesia have collaborated with UNHCR Indonesia to increase refugees access to higher education. Since 2019, UNHCR has collaborated with University Pelita Harapan in Jakarta (UPH). This University send 6 Afghanistan refugees to participate in English language education programs (UPH Beri Bantuan Pendidikan Untuk 6 Pengungsi Afghanistan., 2019). In 2021, UNHCR collaborated with Dompot Dhuafa providing opportunities for 5 refugees to learning activities at the Riau Islamic University (UIR) to join program in the International Relations (UIR, 2021). Another university have Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNHCR is University Raja Ali Haji Maritime (UMRAH) collaborate (UNHCR, 2021).

The Human Rights-Based Policy approach emphasizes that the fulfillment of human rights, including the right to education, is an obligation of the state and all development actors, both public and private. In the context of Business for Peace theory, companies or business institutions are positioned as strategic partners in creating peace through practices that are not only profit-oriented, but also based on the principles of social justice and human rights. The Business for Peace in Indonesia case study shows how a private university played an important role in providing scholarships for Afghan and Palestinian refugees. This initiative reflects a real integration of business interests with humanitarian mandates, where access to higher education is not only seen as a tool of empowerment, but also as a restoration of dignity and recognition of refugees' status as rights holders, not just recipients of aid. This approach reinforces the argument that the private sector, when directed through rights-based policies, can be a catalyst for peace and social inclusion, particularly in conflict-affected and displaced communities.

However, in fact the shift in education towards a business-oriented model question the future of peace education in the context of peace building. Business-oriented education model brings many opportunities and challenges, it is important to maintain a balance between business interests and broader educational goals. Appropriate policies must be put in place to ensure that education remains available, high-quality and equitable for all (The William G. Bowen Series, 2004). Encouraging all segments of a country's populace to pursue higher education requires addressing systemic social injustices ingrained in economic, cultural, and historical contexts that impact a person's capacity for competition. Shifting education towards a more business-oriented direction can make a significant contribution to peacebuilding efforts through the provision of scholarships for Afghan and Palestinian refugees in Indonesia. By optimizing the existing potential and addressing the challenges faced, scholarship programs can be an effective instrument to improve the quality of life for refugees, strengthen relations between countries and promote the creation of a more peaceful world. Scholarship programs encourage cultural exchange and mutual understanding, allowing refugee students to act as informal ambassadors who can build bridges between their home countries and Indonesia. This interaction has the potential to reduce stereotypes, foster empathy, and promote peaceful coexistence (Efe Sevin et al., 2019).

Providing access to higher education for Afghan and Palestinian refugees in Indonesia has a significant impact in strengthening the concept of business for peacebuilding. By offering higher education opportunities, Indonesia not only helps improve the quality of life for refugees, but also creates a positive and economically beneficial diplomatic climate. This access to education allows refugees to gain skills and knowledge that they can use to contribute productively to their local communities, either through participation in the informal economy or by supporting social initiatives. These educated refugees can serve as cultural bridges that promote peace through international understanding, as well as support stronger bilateral relations between Indonesia and their home countries. Integrating business for peacebuilding into higher education for refugees from Afghanistan and Palestine plays a vital role in fostering intercultural competence, leadership skills, and entrepreneurial opportunities. This approach not only addresses educational gaps but also empowers refugees to contribute positively to their communities (Joseph et al., 2023).

This can help to establish a positive reputation and develop diplomatic relations with both Afghanistan and Palestine. Firstly, educational exchange programs create a platform for cultural interchange. As Afghan and Palestinian students study in Indonesia, they will be exposed to Indonesian customs, traditions, and ways of life. Similarly, Indonesian students and faculty will gain a deeper understanding of Afghan and Palestinian cultures. This mutual exchange fosters empathy, tolerance, and respect, laying the groundwork for a more cooperative and peaceful relationship between nations.

Secondly, these programs facilitate knowledge sharing. Afghan and Palestinian students will bring their unique perspectives and experiences to Indonesian classrooms. This cross-pollination of knowledge enriches academic discourse and leads to innovative solutions to global challenges. Indonesian expertise can also be shared, potentially benefiting the development of Afghanistan and Palestine.

Finally, educational exchange programs create opportunities for people-to-people contacts. Students from all three countries will form friendships and professional networks that transcend national borders. These personal connections foster a sense of shared humanity and understanding, serving as a powerful foundation for strong diplomatic ties. In conclusion, by offering scholarships and promoting educational exchange programs, Indonesia can effectively express its values, interests, and aspirations to the international community. This approach can cultivate a positive reputation and build strong diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and Palestine, ultimately contributing to a more peaceful world order.

Opportunities and Challenges in Access to Higher Education

Academic migration, in a broader sense had been associated with globalization. The present study focuses on the academic migrants and the challenges they face in pursuing education. The most common thing they experience is the violence they face in their homeland and this violence destroys their possibilities for livelihood and development in their places of origin. There is a serious need to understand the problem of academic migrants, and the most important comes from their country. There needs to be proper dissemination of information on the admissions process, scholarships and academic schedules related to academic migrants

from abroad (Ahmed, 2021). Refugees and migrants in Indonesia have the opportunity to continue their study at University level. One of the main challenges faced by Afghan and Palestine students in pursuing higher education at University in Indonesia is financial constraints. Based on data Education Strategy 20230 from UNHCR (Grandi, 2019). Although efforts have been made by various parties to support access to education for refugees, obstacles such as language barriers, curriculum differences, restrictions on legal status, and financial limitations remain the main obstacles.

In this context, the main challenge encountered is the lack of policies that allow refugees to be recognized as international students eligible for admission to higher education without difficult administrative requirements, such as prior study documents or student visas (Kadir et al., 2023). There are differences in educational standards between home and host countries, which often result in refugees' qualifications not being recognized. Refugees' qualifications are frequently not recognized due to the disparity in educational standards between their home and host nations. Without appropriate accreditation and verification of their educational accomplishments, many refugees find it challenging to pursue further study or obtain employment in the host nation (UNESCO, 2009). In addition, higher education institutions are also limited by national administrative regulations that require various official documents, which refugees are often unable to provide due to their emergency situation. Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, so it is not legally bound to provide higher education rights for refugees.

Language is often the first and most pressing challenge. Refugees from Afghanistan and Palestine may not have adequate language skills in Indonesian, which is the language of instruction at most higher education institutions in Indonesia. This not only affects their ability to attend lectures, but also interact with lecturers and other students. In addition, differences in the curriculum of home education and education in Indonesia can cause difficulties in academic adjustment. Refugees may have to repeat certain subjects or relearn concepts they learned in their home country in a different way. This adaptation process can be very challenging and time consuming (K. Lalrempuii & Renthlei, 2024). The educational systems and bureaucratic processes in Indonesia can pose significant challenges. Refugee and migrant students often face difficulties in having their previous educational qualifications recognized, leading to delays or denials in university admissions. Furthermore, the language barrier can be a significant obstacle, as many students may not be proficient in Bahasa Indonesia, the medium of instruction in most universities. This can affect their academic performance and integration into the educational environment. Legal status is also a critical issue. Refugees often face uncertainty regarding their residence permits and study permits in Indonesia (Cardarelli, 2023).

In contrast, countries like Germany and Canada have implemented more inclusive policies for refugees seeking higher education. Both nations recognize the importance of providing educational opportunities as a means of integration and empowerment for refugees. In Germany, for instance, refugees are allowed to enroll in university programs under specific conditions, including language courses designed to help them improve their proficiency in German. Germany, with its centralized approach, provides structured access through state-sponsored programs such as DAAD's *Integra*, aimed at supporting language acquisition and academic readiness. In contrast, Canada follows a more decentralized model, relying heavily

on provincial policies and institutional autonomy, supported by strong collaborations with NGOs and community-based programs like WUSC. Despite differing approaches, both countries affirm education as a fundamental right, aligning their national commitments with international human rights standards and demonstrating how higher education can serve not only as a path to integration but also as a long-term investment in peace and community development (Unangst, 2019). In Canada, although refugee education programs have grown, the level of structural integration varies. The research emphasizes the need to analyze how these networks function to shape refugee access to education (Viczo et al., 2021).

A comparative analysis of Germany and Canada, both noted for their proactive refugee policies, provides valuable insights into how host nations might enhance access to higher education for refugees. Both governments have made substantial progress in recognizing and enacting the right to higher education for refugees, incorporating this right into national policy frameworks, university systems, and collaborative projects

Table 1

Comparative Table: Higher Education Access for Refugees – Germany vs. Canada

Aspect	Germany	Canada	Related Theoretical Framework
Government Policy	Centralized and state-led programs (e.g., DAAD's "Integra" initiative)	Decentralized, with strong provincial and institutional autonomy	Human Rights-Based Policy: State responsibility to fulfill the right to education
University Role	Public universities provide access pathways, language support, and preparatory programs	Universities offer scholarships and targeted admissions; community-driven initiatives	Business for Peace: Education as soft power and peacebuilding
Scholarship Schemes	Limited; focused on integration and language acquisition	Programs like WUSC offer full scholarships and social support	Business for Peace + Human Rights: Universities as peace actors investing in society
NGO and Private Sector Involvement	Moderate; mainly driven by public institutions	Strong partnerships between NGOs, private sector, and universities	Business for Peace: Multi-actor collaboration fosters stability
Trauma-Informed Support (MHPSS)	Counseling integrated into university services	MHPSS coordinated between NGOs and institutions; psychosocial focus	Human Rights-Based: Trauma is recognized as part of the right to recovery
Social and Economic Integration	Emphasizes vocational training and labor market integration	Focus on community engagement and empowerment through education	Business for Peace: Education as a social and economic stabilizer

Experiences from Germany and Canada show that granting refugees access to higher education is both a moral duty and a strategic move for peace and social progress. Though their approaches differ, both countries emphasize education's role in restoring dignity, fostering integration, and empowering refugees to actively contribute to development. For Indonesia, which hosts Afghan and Palestinian refugees, adopting a rights-based, peace-focused approach is essential. A Human Rights-Based Policy treats education as a fundamental right for all, regardless of nationality or status. Ensuring equal access to higher education empowers refugee youth, reduces aid dependency, and fosters a generation that contributes to both local communities and regional stability. This approach also strengthens Indonesia's humanitarian identity and its role in global refugee protection efforts.

Afghan and Palestine refugees in Indonesia have significant barriers to higher education, including limited access to resources, lack of institutional support, language barriers and socio-economic challenges which hinder their academic success and integration. Many universities do not have specific programs or services designed to assist refugees which can lead to feelings of isolation and hinder academic journey (Unangst & Crea, 2020). Universities play a crucial role in assisting refugee from Palestine and Afghanistan by providing academic support, language assistance, and psychological and social integration services. These programs are tailored to address the specific needs of refugee students, including past educational disruptions and cultural differences. By collaborating with international education bodies and local communities, universities can facilitate credit transfer, recognize prior qualifications, and promote the integration of refugees into their host societies. This holistic approach empowers refugees to overcome challenges, achieve academic success, and contribute positively to both their home and host communities (Cardarelli, 2023). Scholarship programs offer financial support and flexible learning options to help refugees pursue higher education. However, challenges such as incomplete academic documentation hinder their access to these opportunities. Universities provide additional academic and social support services to help refugees overcome these barriers and successfully integrate into their host countries. By doing so, universities contribute to building inclusive and cohesive societies (Hajisoteriou, 2023).

In addition, Indonesia works with international organizations such as UNHCR to fill the gap in education provision for refugees. Financial constraints are another major challenge. Many refugees come to Indonesia with limited financial resources and cannot afford their higher education without assistance. Scholarships provided by the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are essential in this regard, but the number of scholarships available is often insufficient to meet the needs of all refugees in need. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from various stakeholders, including educational institutions, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the international community. Providing targeted financial aid, language support programs, and mental health services can significantly enhance the educational experiences of Afghan and Palestinian students in Indonesia. Additionally, fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment can help mitigate cultural and social barriers, promoting better integration and academic success (Arar, 2019).

However, various initiatives have been undertaken to address these challenges. Several universities in Indonesia have started providing special programs for refugees, including

language courses and curriculum adaptations. Cross-sector collaboration between universities, government and NGOs also plays an important role in providing the necessary support. Scholarship programs from the private sector and NGOs help reduce the financial burden faced by refugees. To address this issue and help refugees achieve their full potential in higher education, much more needs to be done. This requires an approach that is holistic, collaborative and involves various stakeholders (Guo-Brennan, 2023).

Private university students recommended lowering their tuition costs in order to pay for the resources they needed to participate in their online courses without interruption, such as the internet and instructional materials. Despite not offering online education as expected, private colleges refused to offer any discounts to students and overlooked the technological and financial difficulties they were facing. This situation exacerbated the inequities already present within the educational system, particularly affecting students from low-income backgrounds who struggled to afford the necessary tools for online learning. The lack of institutional support not only hindered their academic progress but also highlighted the broader issue of accessibility and fairness in higher education during times of crisis (Suwartiningsih, 2022). The main challenge in providing scholarships to Afghan and Palestinian refugees in Indonesia is collaboration between universities, government, and NGOs. Although there are several universities that offer educational access for refugees, the lack of a legal framework of the 1951 Refugee Convention. This support relies solely on individual efforts without government policy support. The lack of standardized mechanisms to ensure continuity of educational support is also a barrier, given that many programs rely on short-term funding or grants. Thus, while these cross-sector collaborations are positive efforts, existing structural and legal weaknesses may limit the effectiveness of scholarship and educational continuity programs for refugees in Indonesia (Yuliani, 2020).

In conclusion, the response of private universities to the challenges posed by the shift to online education revealed significant gaps in support for students. Addressing these gaps requires a collaborative effort between educational institutions, policymakers, and the community to ensure that all students have equitable access to the resources they need to succeed, regardless of their financial situation. The implementing targeted financial aid programs, improving technological infrastructure and offering flexible learning options, university can better support their students in overcoming barriers to education. Additionally, continuous feedback from students should be incorporated into policy-making to ensure that their needs are accurately addressed and that solutions are effective and sustainable. Emphasizing the importance of student well-being and academic success, these efforts can pave the way for a more adaptive and inclusive higher education landscape in the face of ongoing and future challenges.

Access to higher education for Afghan and Palestine refugees in Indonesia is a complex issue influenced by legal, social, and educational frameworks. It contributes significantly to the development and empowerment of Afghan and Palestine refugees in Indonesia by improving access to education, providing flexible learning options, and promoting skills development, social inclusion, and human rights. These factors collectively support their integration and capacity building in the new environment (Brown, 2018). Scholarships make higher education financially accessible for refugees, helping raise their low enrollment rates. These programs offer long-term benefits for both refugee students and their host communities

(Xu & Kan, 2020). Higher education equips refugees with skills to support economic and social progress. They can help fill labor gaps, drive innovation, and foster cultural understanding. Supporting their education also reduces social tensions and strengthens community cohesion in host countries (Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

Peacebuilding and post-conflict rehabilitation are significantly influenced by scholarships. With higher levels of education, the knowledge and skills they have learned in school can improve infrastructure and improve governance. Education can help conflict-affected areas recover faster (Sicka, 2022). Education has the power to create more intelligent communities that can resolve conflict and promote enduring peace. Because it introduces fresh ideas and viewpoints, education for migrants and refugees benefits host nations economically. Global competitiveness can be raised and labor shortages can be lessened by integrating educated refugees into the workforce (Hatton, 2014). The significant role of scholarship in peacebuilding and post-conflict rehabilitation arises from its capacity to empower individuals through education and foster understanding.

Conclusion and Implication

Higher education plays a critical role in supporting the integration, self-reliance, and self-development of refugees and migrants. Through education, they can gain skills and credentials for social and economic inclusion. However, access is hampered by language, financial, mental health, and institutional policies that are less responsive to their needs. While higher education has the potential to be transformative, its impact is limited without systemic support and inclusive policies. Institutions and policymakers need to understand the unique backgrounds and needs of refugees and migrants that differ from those of the general student population. To achieve more inclusive and effective access to higher education for refugees, especially from Afghanistan and Palestine, a well-coordinated strategy is needed that takes into account their specific circumstances and needs. A holistic and responsive approach is needed to address their needs in their entirety. Education is recognized as a fundamental human right under various international treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The challenges and opportunities in providing higher education to refugees, especially Afghan and Palestinian students, are diverse. Addressing social justice issues, increasing access and participation, and implementing effective policies are critical steps in supporting this vulnerable population in pursuing higher education. Policy plays a critical role in improving access to education for refugees. Providing specialized programs aimed at refugee students can help address the challenges they face. Programs can include language support, academic counseling, and mental health services tailored to the needs of displaced individuals, as well as ensuring they have the resources necessary to succeed in their studies. Additionally, providing scholarships and tuition waivers specifically for refugee students can ease the economic barriers they face. This financial support is especially important for Afghan and Palestinian students, who have a desire to contribute to higher education (Sicka, 2022).

Higher education helps refugees rebuild their lives, gain financial independence, and integrate into host communities. It equips them with skills and knowledge to become future change agents. Countries supporting refugee education through scholarships and inclusive programs also benefit from a more diverse, skilled workforce (Almeida et al., 2019). To achieve effective and sustainable access to higher education for refugees, it is important for the global community, educational institutions, and governments to collaborate, support special scholarships, provide language assistance services, and introduce flexible policies that reduce bureaucratic barriers for refugees.

Investing in scholarships and support programs is critical to ensuring that refugees can access higher education and transition smoothly from high school to college. Global educators must address educational barriers, empower refugees, and enhance their future prospects and integration. Sustained access requires long-term support and an awareness of the unique challenges refugees face. Beyond scholarships and flexible policies, inclusive academic environments are essential, offering career guidance and mental health support tailored to refugees. Online education provides flexible solutions for those with legal or financial limitations. Flexible learning models and staff training in cultural competency and trauma-informed care enhance institutional support. Language courses, credential evaluations, and faculty training further facilitate integration. Ultimately, collaboration between educators, institutions, and policymakers is key to bridging the gap from secondary to higher education. These efforts foster refugee empowerment, economic growth, and cultural exchange, benefiting both refugees and host communities.

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