



The Open
University



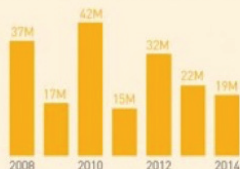
Refugee Movements and Education: Shaping the OU's Response

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Between 2008 and 2014, 184M people were displaced by a disaster. This is equivalent to one person per second.

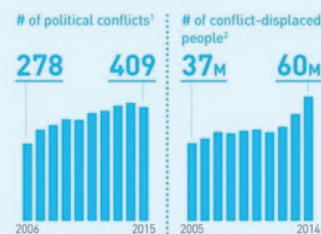
of people displaced by disasters (2008-2014)¹



Around the world, about **60 million** people fled their homes due to conflicts and violence in 2014. This is the highest number since the Second World War.



An increased number of conflicts resulted in an increased number of forcibly displaced people.



20% of the world's total population lives in fragile situations.⁴

125M people are at risk of being left behind.⁴



Migration and forced displacement are among the most pressing global challenges of our era.

According to UNHCR (2016a) the number of displaced people globally has risen to the highest levels recorded - 65.3 million. A significant proportion of them are young and were in education but after moving they struggle to access education, particularly higher education. Thus, only 1% of refugee youth are in higher education compared to 34% of youth globally (UNHCR 2016b). Enabling refugees to access higher education helps to address skill shortages. However, the scale of displacement has meant that validating the skills of migrants who have no papers, providing skills to those who are mobile, and building educational capacity have all become urgent problems across Europe, in the MENA region as well as in other parts of the world. Skills include a wide range of formal and informal knowledge, capabilities and dispositions acquired prior to migration, in transit, and in destination countries.

The Open University has the research base, technical skills, expertise and mission alignment to develop, implement and support large scale, durable and sustainable solutions to the educational needs of displaced communities. We believe there is a compelling argument to make this an exceptional strategic priority for the university.

In this document we describe the Need, the Strategic Fit of galvanising a response to that need, our Capabilities to do so, the Approach we might take and what resources are available.

The Need

The challenges of

- validating the skills and expertise of refugees who have no papers,
- providing skills, knowledge and capabilities to displaced communities,
- ensuring high-quality in education solutions, and
- building educational capacity at all levels

We believe that the Open University is uniquely and ideally placed to fill this gap. Our scoping research suggests that there have been a number of initiatives by host governments, by private providers and by INGOs but such initiatives suffer from being piecemeal and the demand far outstrips supply, especially in core areas such as English language education.

The OU's expertise lies in two linked areas:

1 Our world-leading capabilities in digital innovation means that we can offer education solutions at a large scale not only to individuals but on a national and institutional level, or in partnership with other providers in the field. Furthermore the OU's technical skills involve the provision of learning devices that form part of the university's core technological innovations. The OU's strength in digital education technologies is paired with significant experience

of running innovative educational programmes that are functional both online and offline, or without digital devices being available for periods of time. Being able to offer learning solutions that flexibly adapt to a changing context and infrastructure is crucial given the specifically challenging situation of forcefully displaced communities. The British Council in the MENA Region reported to us that although only 15% of refugees are in camps, most of the provision is focused on them. Strengthening the neglected education systems of host communities, as well as addressing displaced communities outside camps, is absolutely critical.

2 Our research on skills, integration and citizenship concerns the formal and informal skills that migrants require. A number of projects have explored formal skills such as medicine, IT work, entrepreneurship, education, and the pharmaceutical industry etc. Migrant entrepreneurship, information technology and health migration have, in particular, been key areas of intervention. These projects have shown the significance of migration for populating these sectors of the economy and the value of skilled labour migration. The projects have led to key insights aimed at both policy makers and academics. Our research also suggests that migrants require not only formal skills but also dispositions and informal skills that are crucial to migrant well-being, integration and to the economy. Tacit skills are necessary for running migrant enterprise for instance as well as used among migrant brokers who enable migrants to engage in the host community. The University's Centre on Citizenship Identity and Governance (<http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/research/migration-and-belongings>) and the Strategic Research Area (SRA) Citizenship & Governance have a long trajectory of world leading work around issues of citizenship multiply configured, and has put the question of citizenship within Europe, notions and understandings of citizenship beyond Europe and non citizenship and activism as a central part of the research agenda. Other research focuses on statelessness and asylum-seekers and on race, religion

and gender. The question of earned citizenship and the social-psychological experience of migration has been a particular contribution by the social psychologists at The Open University.

Given the scale and complexity of the refugee situation in Europe, the MENA region and globally, the OU needs to and can do more. This document sets out a strategic agenda that we believe should become a priority for the OU.

Strategic Fit

Delivering high quality, relevant and empowering learning at scale, direct to those who are most in need, speaks eloquently to the OU's reputation for academic excellence and social justice.

Since enrolling its first students in 1971 The Open University has remained true to its mission, defining its purpose as an organisation that supports anyone, anywhere, to access and use lifelong learning to improve their lives and those of their families and the communities around them.

The proposed strategic priority aims to draw on this mission to offer a programme of support for forcibly displaced people, educators, educational policy makers, national and international nongovernmental organisations, and governments in receiving countries.

Such activity directly supports the goals of the Students First Strategy to be inclusive, innovative and responsive.

We have exceptional experience in giving voice to our students, responding to their needs and capturing their stories and experience as well as the data that describes their actions. The proposed strategic priority dovetails with the university's Research Strategy in several important ways, and which links to the strategic multi-million investment made into International Development & Inclusive Innovation and Citizenship & Governance research at The Open University.

Research Shaping the Future seeks:

- To transform lives and deal with global challenges Skills development for vulnerable mobile populations will achieve this.
- To expand research collaborations within and beyond the OU This initiative would coalesce an extensive internal inter-disciplinary network, and strengthen existing links with UN bodies, EU agencies, charitable foundations, and HEIs;
- To promote knowledge sharing This initiative is premised on strong links between all the pillars of the OU mission – teaching, research, and external engagement in the service of social justice.

Capabilities

The University has a unique combination of expertise in the core competencies needed to provide education support for mobile and displaced communities:

<p>World leader in Open and Distance Learning</p>	<p>The Open University is a world leader in the delivery, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning, technology-enabled learning, and English language learning, all critical for mobile populations disengaged from formal learning institutions.</p> <p>Through projects such as English in Action, TESSA and HEAT we have reached thousands of learners in challenging and remote constituencies, working with local partners to ensure ownership and relevance.</p> <p>We already have the EU-funded LASER (Language, Academic skills and E-learning Resources) project in Jordan supporting Syrian refugees, and can extend such initiatives through longer-term partnerships.</p>
<p>Leading edge research in key areas</p>	<p>We also have a series of research and teaching projects that have sought to understand the skills that migrants and refugees possess in negotiating their mobility and delivered mobile education for refugees and tools for integration of migrants. The ERC-funded OECUMENE project and the EU-funded ENACT project sought to think about how citizenship was being reconfigured through activity and not just activism. The project has led to widespread rethinking of how citizenship is conceptualized and enacted. The EU-funded MASELTOV programme delivered skills through mobile phones, a spin-off from English in Action targeted the needs of Bangladeshi migrant workers going to the Middle East, and the EU-funded Grundtvig Lifelong Learning programme Women Learning Together gathered stories of women refugees about their previous education and job skills. Using this accumulated knowledge we can scale-up the range of technology-enabled support for mobile populations.</p>
<p>Record of public engagement</p>	<p>Public engagement on the issue of mass migration has never been more pressing. We have already engaged in a range of such initiatives including Mapping Refugee Media Journeys, Exodus: Our Journey to Europe, The Tate Modern Exchange, the ESRC Impact Acceleration Awards on migration and refugee issues, and projects with Migrant Artists Mutual Aid.</p>
<p>Strong relevant networks</p>	<p>We have strong internal and external networks with key stakeholders. Internally we have a core team of research leaders who would champion this work, coupled with a wider network of over 55 colleagues working on refugees and migrants. We have external networks with concerned organisations including the British Council; Refugee Council; Arab OU; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion (IMISCOE) of which the OU is now a member; United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD); Connected Learning Consortium (UNHCR); International Organization for Migration (IOM); Migration Museum Project, Kiron; UK National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC); German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD); Norwegian Council; The Organisation for Internationalisation in Education (EP-NUFFIC); Council of Europe; and the Swedish Migration Board.</p>
<p>Dedicated office for managing international development projects</p>	<p>IDO takes the OU's mission and values and applies them to meet global development challenges. It has a strategic focus to be highly distinctive as the leader in life-changing learning for sustainable development, with significant experience in combining the OU's deep expertise in open and distance learning, academic excellence and leading project management skills to develop innovative, scalable, and evidence-based solutions to global challenges.</p>

Approach

A cross-university group that works with the wider network of over 55 concerned colleagues will lead in development and implementation of the proposed strategic priority. Its remit will be to promote teaching and research, policy and public engagement in the relevant areas to the joint benefit of refugees and the OU. Such activities are being driven by academic staff in

the International Development and Inclusive Innovation and Citizenship & Governance Strategic Research Areas. The relevance and commitment to this plan is evidenced by the range of other units across the university who have contributed to and engaged in discussions. Their interests and possible roles are given below:

Strategic Research Areas (SRAs)	With around £5 million in OU investment over 5 years the International Development and Inclusive Innovation and Citizenship & Governance SRAs both have migration as core themes involving 18 academics.
Open Media Unit	Through the Open Media Unit the OU has access to the mass media, and we can develop teaching and learning resources that can be multi-platformed thereby reducing production costs.
The International Development Office (IDO)	Through the International Development Office we have experience of delivering locally appropriate teaching at scale through partnerships and can use this in developing approaches for refugees in the Middle East. We have recently undertaken fact-finding visits to the Middle East to augment our capacity here.
Institute of Educational Technology (IET)	Through IET we have experience of using technology platforms to deliver content and social support in accessible ways.
Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (CICP)	Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships works to widen access to and success in higher education. This includes managing the OU's Widening Access and Success strategy and its Access provision, working collaboratively with external organisations through validation and the Social Partnerships Network and developing research and scholarship via the Access Observatory.
Four nations	We are a four nation university providing national coverage, which is vital for delivering locally-relevant provision for migrants coming to all four UK nations.

In consultation across the OU we have established 5 linked programme areas that would be developed within this strategic priority:

1. Accreditation: Developing a platform for accreditation of previous skills

- Refugees leave their countries of origin with both formal and informal skills and qualifications, but as they enter new territories these skills are not easily recognised or validated. If refugees are to continue their education and/or enter relevant employment in new contexts, they need this prior learning verified and accredited. The OU has already developed modules to do this, which could be modified for other contexts and disciplines and made available for mobile populations through organisations like the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) and higher education councils across Europe.

2. Content: Developing skills for mobile populations

These activities will develop and deliver teaching and learning resources for mobile populations using flexible and accessible technologies.

- Developing and offering MOOCs that can be used to bring migrants and refugees to a baseline of educational standards, qualification and skills before they embark on their degrees.
- Developing employability skills of migrants and refugees through sponsored learning to meet labour market demand in key sectors, for example building on the OU's experience with training of health workers in Africa. We could work with the British Council, local partners and national governments to

develop HE and teacher training for refugee education, particularly in tested areas such as health worker education, teacher education and English language learning both in camps and more widely.

3. Services: Building educational capacity

These activities will develop the capacity of local or regional partners to effectively and sustainably develop and deliver relevant educational provision to mobile populations:

- Co-develop and provide mobile learning platforms for use by other providers of education for migrants and refugees, which builds directly on MASELTOV. The MASELTOV initiative was a first step in providing information, social support and skill development for migrants on smartphones, but we could do more around claiming rights, the asylum process, religious issues, accessing social welfare provision etc. Such practical approaches have also been trialed in the 'Caring Counts', a free reflection course developed by OU Scotland. Content would need to be tailored to national circumstances and cultures so that inter-cultural learning and language translation would be central to programmes of work. In the UK possible partners could be the Refugee Council as well as more local refugee support groups.
- Training the trainers: English language remains the most in-demand skill amongst refugees. The OU has the potential to train trainers and educators in English language learning through collaboration with, for example, the British Council.

4. Research

- Access to education: There is a plethora of initiatives and increasing amounts of funding for refugee higher education. However, there has been no systematic overview of current provision. The OU has already undertaken an initial scoping in selected countries and has the ability to provide both robust overview of the demand for HE and of existing provision.
- Quality of education: The importance of technology enabled learning and of blended learning in refugee contexts is increasingly recognized but the specific challenges of each and examples of best practice can be identified through OU research. Learning analytics and learning gains models are currently being trialed in distance learning education contexts in Africa and can be usefully applied to refugee populations for the first time. This would enable distance educators to develop learning models that are suited to the specific requirements of refugee students taking account of their prior learning, current context and future aspirations.

5. Systems: Institutional strengthening

Since refugees mostly dwell outside camps, demand for education is not confined to them, which places pressure on existing educational providers from schools through to tertiary, higher and vocational institutions. Working with the British Council and/or The Arab OU in the MENA Region we could use our existing work on organizational capacity building (e.g. the College of Policing) to work with local partners and education ministries to develop distance and open learning programmes to meet these increased needs. Such work would also require advocacy with ministries and employer networks in the region to recognize and validate qualifications achieved through open and distance learning.

6. Raising public awareness

- A key aim is helping the public make informed decisions about migration and refugees as a social issue. BREXIT has focused attention on the need for informed debate on migration and we could produce, in conjunction with the Open Broadcast Unit, open access and mass media resources to help the public navigate these complex and dynamic debates. FASS are already planning a series of MOOCS on post-BREXIT issues which would feed into this activity area.

This core of activity could be accompanied by a wrap around set of initiatives including:

- fee waivers on selected OU courses (e.g. the new Masters in Translation, computing, social sciences, creative writing, etc) both individually and in partnership with organisations such as Kiron, with whom we recently signed an MoU, and who facilitate mobile access to learning that is guaranteed to be recognised for subsequent transfer to traditional universities;
- Facilitation of access to Future Learn and OpenLearn courses;
- One off workshops on support for bid writing, invitations to visiting scholars and postgraduate students.

Refugee education will also offer a platform for OU staff to engage directly in the OU's social justice mission. It would create opportunities for OU staff to volunteer in providing language classes; act as liaison points for engaging with refugee support groups and channeling requests to study; train lay refugee researchers in social science and other research skills and involve them directly to promote education, training and skills development to enhance employment opportunities; and offer opportunities for engaging students in peer support. Opening up the regional centres during the daytime for face-to-face teaching and support activities would make the OU a lived presence in the regions.

Resources

A serious, coordinated effort will require significant resource.

International development funders are allocating vast amounts of funding to migration in light of the current refugee crises. They are looking to fund initiatives which aim to learn about and respond to issues of migration and forced displacement, and provide essential services for those who do migrate. To effectively respond to successive refugee crises an integrated response is needed. Bringing together migration expertise across the university will allow the development of holistic concepts for funding which, combined with the scale and reach of the OU, can make a significant difference. Examples of the range of funding available are given below:

- The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is a £1.5 billion UK government fund to support cutting-edge cross-disciplinary research that addresses the challenges faced by developing countries. One of the key challenges under GCRF is to understand and effectively respond to multiple refugee crises and a huge variety of calls will be tendered by all UK research councils.
- The Madad Fund (EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis) is a €730 million fund for a broad range of interventions to support refugees from Syria
- DFID are one of the leading funders in the Syrian humanitarian effort and have recently tendered several multi-million pound contracts for research into refugee and migrant livelihoods in sub-Saharan African countries. They also have the SPHEIR (Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform), which is valued at up to £5 million/project and one already addresses refugee education. They are also seeking a consortium to lead the UK's involvement in Lebanon's RACE II Education Programme.
- The Open Society Foundations open call – 'Supporting Universities Providing Higher Education to Refugees' to aims to fund initiatives that extend higher education to refugees and supporting refugee academics to continue their teaching and research
- The Horizon 2020 call - ENG-GLOBALLY-03-2017 – provides funding for up to €5m to research a coherent approach to management of migration or to EU policy. There is a strong indication of the increasing priority migration plays within Horizon 2020 with more calls/ topics on migration expected in the 2018-20 Work Programme.

- A significant number of trusts and foundations are also funding initiatives researching and delivering essential services to refugees and migrants both worldwide and in the UK. This kind of funding will allow the OU to develop its own integrated solutions where it sees the greatest need.

This document has been developed by a Migration Working Group comprising Parvati Raghuram (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, FASS), Giles Mohan (FASS), Matt Foster (IDO), Marie Gillespie (FASS), Liz Marr (CICP), Agnes Kukulska-Hulme (IET), Jhumar Johnson (OUDO), and Simon Lee (Faculty of Business and Law)