



Syrian Refugees Higher Education Crisis

An Article & Presentation

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Purpose of presentation:

To raise awareness about the current Syrian higher education crisis among the conference participants and to seek solutions



Why should this crisis be discussed at CONAHEC conference?

- A. This is the most critical higher education issue since World War II
- B. There's a presence of governments, entrepreneurs, academics, NGOs and students
- C. This crisis needs urgent attention



FACTS:

11,000,000 Syrians displaced (over 6 million refugees). One of the serious consequences is the “lost generation” of students. Students without financial means or institutional access to continue their education.

In 2011, a quarter of the 18-24 olds were enrolled in universities. Currently, 150,000 without access + 2,000 Syrian university professionals among refugees


Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon have taken a majority of the refugees. As of 2015, an estimated 90,000-110,000 out of 450,000 Syrians aged 18-22 years are qualified for higher education in Turkey.

Less than 2% enrolled in 2015 but in 2017, it increased to 4%



Barriers to Enter Universities:

1. Lack of proper documents (transcripts, passports, diplomas, credit transfers)
2. Language barrier
3. Lack of funding
4. Political tensions in the host country
5. Cultural and societal limitations
6. Rise of global nationalism and the victory of far right parties in the elections in Europe. “My country first” is the common slogan. They argue that social programs (education & medicine) are abused by the refugees.



Syrian Enrollment in the Higher Education Sectors of Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon

Declining at many Lebanese institutions: discrimination, lack of safety for women, no financial support, language barrier (knowledge of French or English to pass the university entrance exam)

Increasing gradually in Jordan : more stable than Lebanon politically but facing increasing societal, economic and environmental pressures

Increasing rapidly in Turkey: Expanded educational opportunities



Efforts in North America

Canada: Taken in 25,000 Syrian Refugees

1. Fund raising
2. Offering scholarships and establishing a relationship with the World Service of Canada
3. Partnership with Lifeline Syria to resettle 1,000 Syrian refugees in Toronto



Efforts by Mexico & Praise for Mexico!

Habesha Initiative started 3 years ago . Run by a network of Mexican professionals in contact with international organizations active in areas affected by the Syrian conflict

Resettled 30 students in Mexico (Aguascalientes, north central Mexico. (Only 39 students reached Mexico since 2014)

Habesha arranges university scholarship



Efforts by the United States

- 18,007 Syrian refugees resettled between 2011 & 2016 - 47% under the age of 14 and 12% between 14 & 20
- Refugees to U.S. complain of lack of higher education opportunities as covering the basic needs is a priority
- In general, U.S. has not committed itself to provide access to higher education



IIE Efforts:

1. In 2012, managed a consortium of universities to host threatened scholars and provide student scholarships but only 13 universities listed from both Europe and U.S.
2. Scholar rescue fund granted 80 fellowships for threatened Syrian professors
3. There's a funding gap to be covered by the students up to \$20,000



Dangers Involved if Access is not Provided

1. Women's early marriage instead of pursuing a career
2. Men's radicalization by terrorist organizations

An educational institution provides a protective and safe environment



How can the Consortium of the North American Higher Education Help?

Recommendations:

1. Create a sub consortium division (a rescue program) for a scholar fund and student scholarship for Syrian refugees
2. Engage students and alumni advising Syrian refugees on-line
3. Provide support and resources to the countries of Turkey, Jordan, & Lebanon with the most refugees



Continued

4. Create a database to list scholarships, rescue funds, sponsorships, students and alumni assistance information

5. A funding proposal: “A dollar a month” contribution by CONAHEC members





What are your institutions' efforts to help Syrian refugees to access higher education?