

REQUEST RESPONSE

Evidence Synthesis: The importance of investing in tertiary education for refugees in Jordan

REQUEST SUBMISSION

FCDO Jordan has requested a rapid literature review to support a better evidence-based understanding of the importance for governments and donors to prioritize and invest in tertiary education for refugees in Jordan, as well as the costs of inaction.

The request encompasses the following research questions:

1. What evidence exists on the importance of investing in education, and tertiary education in particular, and how it can contribute to overall poverty reduction, social cohesion, and economic stability for both the host country and the global economy?
2. What are the costs of inaction?
3. What lessons learned and best practices could Jordan and the international community at large draw from the role tertiary education plays in improving social and economic outcomes for refugee youth?

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KEY POINTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Globally, access to higher education for refugee youth is a significant challenge. It is estimated that just 7% of refugee youth worldwide were accessing higher education as of 2023, compared to a global average of 42% (UNHCR, 2023a). In Jordan, less than 5% of Syrian refugees complete higher education, compared with 40% of Jordanians (Durable Solutions Platform, 2022).
- While education in emergencies tends to focus on primary education, a variety of international policy targets now include the provision of full-cycle educational opportunities, including the UNHCR 15by30 target, the Sustainable Development Goal 4, and UNESCO's Target 4.
- Research shows that higher education equips individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective labour market participation, leading to better job prospects, higher wages, socioeconomic integration, and upward mobility. This report demonstrates that there are numerous benefits and returns from higher education beyond labour market participation.
- Studies indicate that in Jordan, the prospect of higher education significantly enhances students' motivation to stay enrolled in school. Providing continuous educational journeys for refugee youth reduces the impact of displacement on educational opportunities and life choices.
- Access to tertiary education can protect refugee youth in Jordan from vulnerabilities such as recruitment into armed groups, irregular migration and its associated risks, and gender-based violence. Refugee education can also improve regional and global stability by decreasing motivation for irregular migration and mitigating violent extremism.
- Research shows that higher education has a positive impact on well-being, psychosocial health, and self-esteem. Education also provides a structured environment and a sense of purpose, enabling refugees to focus on future aspirations for their personal and professional lives.
- Higher education is a powerful tool for promoting gender equity, providing young women with increased access to professional and technical roles; higher earnings and economic independence; and reductions in gender-based violence, early marriage, and teenage pregnancy.
- Programmes integrating refugee students into higher education have shown significant benefits for social cohesion, empowering young people to be drivers of positive change in their host societies.
- While the benefits of higher education for refugees are manifold, research shows that demand far outweighs supply in Jordan, leaving many refugee youths idle and with few prospects for the future. Sustainable funding is needed to provide adequate access to higher education.
- The barriers preventing access to higher education must be addressed, including financial constraints, lack of awareness and information on available opportunities, and limited availability of programmes, need to be addressed.
- While global research is growing, focused research on Jordan is needed to provide the required evidence to incentivise donor engagement.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Higher education for refugees in Jordan is not merely an aspect of individual academic development; it is a lifeline for entire communities, fostering intra- and inter-community relationships. Higher education also provides essential tools for sustainable development, reduces reliance on international aid, and contributes significantly to global and regional public goods such as peace and gender equity. (ARDD, 2016; Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022; UNHCR, 2023a; UNHCR, 2023b)

Due to legal restrictions around refugee employment, the immediate returns from higher education related to livelihoods in Jordan are limited, particularly in the formal sector. However, this report demonstrates that higher education offers numerous benefits and returns beyond employment. The evidence presented highlights the multifaceted benefits of investing in tertiary education for refugees, including enhanced social cohesion, gender equality, and improved wellbeing. However, the consequences of neglecting this investment are severe, resulting in increased dependency, social unrest, and missed opportunities. Without higher education, refugees face perpetuated poverty and social instability, and economic stagnation is exacerbated (ARDD, 2016).

The economic implications of inaction are profound. A lack of investment in higher education for refugees leads to lost potential for economic contributions, increased reliance on social welfare, and long-term financial dependency on international aid (Turner et al., 2019). Moreover, failing to provide higher education opportunities reduces motivation among refugee students, leading to higher dropout rates and diminished educational outcomes (UNHCR, 2022; UNHCR, 2023b).

Access to higher education plays a crucial role in mental and emotional health, providing refugees with a sense of purpose and direction. It serves as a protective mechanism, reducing risks such as gender-based violence, early marriage, recruitment into armed groups, and irregular migration (Turner et al., 2019; UNHCR, 2022). Education fosters positive identity development, self-worth, and agency among refugee youth, enabling them to navigate complex social environments effectively (ARDD, 2016; Berg, 2023; Hajisoteriou, 2023; Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022). For women and girls, higher education promotes gender equality, reduces gender-based violence, and empowers them as agents of change. It also fosters mutual understanding and community cohesion, reducing social tensions and promoting inclusive societies (Turner et al., 2019; UNHCR, 2022).

Moreover, higher education is essential for fostering peace and stability, reducing the risks of radicalisation, and contributing to regional and global security (Berg, 2023; El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017; Elshami, 2024; Turner et al., 2019). Investing in higher education supports durable solutions, facilitating local integration, repatriation, and reconstruction efforts. It enhances human and social capital, driving sustainable development and long-term prosperity (ARDD, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Turner et al., 2019).

The evidence highlights that substantive investment is urgently needed to fully grasp how refugee participation in higher education affects the economic and social development of host countries. Comprehensive research on the return on investment in higher education for refugees is vital to highlight incentives, overcome resistance, and drive funding towards inclusive higher education initiatives (UNHCR, 2023a). The literature on the impact of higher education opportunities for refugees in Jordan has not kept pace with the expanding landscape and global evidence, and expanded research is crucial to provide an evidence base for increased donor engagement. (ARDD, 2016; El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017; Turner et al., 2019).

These positive outcomes of higher education can only be achieved with a solid commitment to higher education opportunities for refugees from the international funding community. Investing in higher

education for refugees is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for ensuring a stable and prosperous future for both refugees and host communities. Sustainable funding is crucial; without it, practical solutions remain theoretical (ARDD, 2016).

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Access to higher education for refugee youth is a significant challenge. Globally, there are approximately 3.8 million refugee youth of tertiary education age, yet their access to higher education is severely limited. While data on refugee access to higher education remains incomplete, it is estimated that just 7% of refugee youth worldwide were accessing higher education as of 2023, compared to a global average of 42% (UNHCR, 2023a).

Expanding inclusive tertiary education for refugees is essential for achieving numerous benefits. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) emphasises that providing full-cycle educational opportunities is crucial for humanitarian responses that align with development goals. In 2019, UNHCR and its partners set a goal to achieve 15% enrolment of refugee youth in higher education by 2030 – the 15by30 target (UNHCR, 2023a). To reach this target, it will be necessary to address not only individual challenges for refugee students but also structural and institutional issues (Berg, 2023).

“Higher education is not merely a next step in the education cycle. The chance to develop post-secondary skills and qualifications is the essential bridge between learning and earning, between dependence and self-reliance.” (UNHCR, 2023a)

Historically, education in emergencies has focused largely on the provision of primary and secondary education with tertiary education receiving less attention and support despite its critical importance (Daltry et al., 2023). Reflecting global trends of the narrowing pipeline, in Jordan, less than 5% of Syrian refugees complete higher education, compared with 40% of Jordanians (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2012, Durable Solutions Platform, 2022). Notably, there is no reliable data on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) enrolment, but it is believed to be very low (Turner et al., 2019). Evidence suggests that addressing all levels of education simultaneously—a systems-building approach—offers significant benefits for both individuals and society (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). Research shows that for Jordan, like elsewhere, the crux of the issue is funding (ARDD, 2016).

While higher education is too often dissociated from the right to education, international human rights law is clear: the right to education includes the obligation of states to ensure that higher education is made accessible to all based on capacity (UNESCO, 2022). Higher education is increasingly recognised as an indispensable goal for sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 aims to provide inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels, including tertiary education. This goal is supported by UNESCO’s Target 4.3, which aims to ensure equal access for all to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university education, by 2030. Scholars argue that there is an obligation to provide higher education opportunities for refugees, emphasising that education is a fundamental human right.

The provision of higher education to refugees in Jordan has often been sporadic and uncoordinated, though there has been a growing recognition of the need for more coordinated and sustainable approaches (ARDD, 2016). This reactionary strategy has been blamed for creating a generation of

dependent and disempowered refugees and donor fatigue. The inclusion of higher education in the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) in 2015 signified an important shift towards recognising the integral role of tertiary education in emergency response and protracted crises. The JRP for 2019 stresses that low levels of TVET, higher education, and labour force participation will, in turn, translate into increased vulnerability (MOPIC, 2019b). The JRP for 2020–2022 highlights the need for greater investment in higher education, noting that only 22% of Syrians who passed Grade 12 received scholarships for higher education (MOPIC, 2019a).

Numerous assessments reflect the high demand for higher education among refugee populations in Jordan (ARDD, 2016; Elshami, 2024; Hollow et al., 2016). However, donor commitments often fall short of meeting the aspirations of refugee youths to enrol in higher education (Elshami, 2024). Research focused on Jordan stresses that issues in primary and secondary education should not be seen in isolation from higher education. All levels of education initiatives must be conducted in tandem to ensure continuity through the education system, just as in contexts not affected by emergencies. The aim should be to mitigate the impact that forced displacement has on individuals' educational opportunities and life choices. Access to higher education allows them to support their communities in exile and contribute to the future development of their home countries, ensuring that vulnerability, marginalisation, and isolation are not exacerbated (ARDD, 2016).

3. IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Economic implications

Higher education **equips individuals with skills and knowledge essential for effective labour market participation and economic growth**. In Jordan, investing in tertiary education for refugees provides for potential contributions from a skilled labour force that can fill market gaps, drive technical development and social innovation, and increase productivity (Tiltne et al., 2019). Nearly half (48%) of Syrian students plan to pursue university education to secure better employment opportunities in the future. Additionally, 12% aim to enhance their economic and financial situation, as well as that of their families. The lack of employment opportunities and the desire to remain intellectually engaged and not become idle has also been cited as a motivator to pursue higher education (Steivi et al., 2018).

Higher education also drives **socioeconomic integration and upward mobility**. Research in Jordan shows links between higher education and **better job prospects and higher wages**, with 58% of men with higher education in employment compared to the average of 46% for all men (Tiltne et al., 2019). Globally, the economic returns for tertiary education graduates are the highest in the entire educational system (UNHCR, 2022). However, it is key to note, and relevant to Jordan that access to higher education cannot translate into higher earnings without the right to work (UNHCR, 2023b).

Due to legal restrictions around refugee employment, the immediate returns from higher education connected to livelihoods in Jordan are limited, particularly for refugee participation in the formal sector. However, the following sections demonstrate that there are numerous benefits and returns from HE beyond employment.

Reducing school dropout and enhancing retention

Studies indicate that in Jordan, the prospect of higher education significantly **enhances students' motivation to stay enrolled in school, reducing dropout rates** among refugee children and youth (Gladwell et al., 2016; Tamrat, 2020). Without the prospect of advancing to higher education, refugee students often lack the incentive to remain in school, perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependency and limiting future opportunities. This is particularly true for refugee children facing additional barriers and uncertainties (ARDD, 2016; Hollow et al., 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2020; Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022; Turner et al., 2019). The inaccessibility of higher education discourages many Syrian children in Jordan from pursuing secondary education (UNESCO, 2016b).

“Where tertiary education is not a possibility, learners have reported lower levels of motivation and persistence at the primary and secondary levels” (Hollow et al., 2016)

A global evaluation of the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) programme found that 83% of respondents indicated that the possibility of being selected for the DAFI programme represented an incentive to complete secondary education (UNHCR, 2022). Ensuring a **continuity of pathways** from primary to higher education is crucial for maintaining student engagement. For Syrian refugees in Jordan, interconnected and continuous educational journeys provide students with a clear, achievable path and mitigate disruptions caused by displacement (UNESCO, 2016b).

Enhanced Well-being

Higher education offers refugee youth a sense of purpose and direction, combating feelings of stagnation and hopelessness while improving well-being and **mitigating psychosocial risks**. It provides opportunities for personal and professional growth, essential for maintaining mental health and well-being. Access to higher education helps refugees develop essential skills and competencies, enabling them to rebuild their lives despite displacement. It also fosters self-esteem and resilience through psychosocial support (ARDD, 2016; Berg, 2023; Hajisoteriou, 2023; Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022).

Research links higher education to greater integration, healing from trauma, and smoother resettlement for refugees (Berg, 2023; Hajisoteriou, 2023; UNHCR, 2023a). However, in Jordan, the demand for higher education far exceeds supply, leaving many refugee youth idle with few prospects.

Higher education empowers refugees, offering a **pathway to personal growth** and meaningful community contributions. It increases resilience, feelings of empowerment, and hope for the future (ARDD, 2016; Berg, 2023; Hajisoteriou, 2023; Turner et al., 2019). Programs like the DAFI scholarship in Jordan have shown how higher education can significantly improve the financial and psychosocial status of refugee youth and their families (United Nations in Jordan, 2022).

Education also provides a structured environment, enabling refugees to shift from a survival mindset to a future-oriented perspective, which is crucial for **combating stagnation and hopelessness** and improving mental health and well-being (ARDD, 2016; Berg, 2023; Hajisoteriou, 2023; Turner et al., 2019). For refugee youth in Jordan, higher education represents a beacon of hope and motivation, helping them envision a better future for themselves and their communities. Studies of scholarship programmes for Syrian refugees in Jordan demonstrate that tertiary education not only enhances academic access but also significantly improves the financial and psychosocial well-being of beneficiaries' families and uplifts the broader community (Alkharouf et al., 2024).

"It may also be an alternative to the labour market since if access to the labour market is limited for young people, as it often is in situations of emergency and reconstruction, they need the stimulus and challenge of education to absorb their energies and lessen their frustrations and anxiety about the future." (Dryden-Peterson, 2010)

The **long-term benefits** of higher education for refugees are substantial. It provides tools to navigate new environments, build social networks, and access better job opportunities, contributing to long-term stability and improved mental health outcomes. Additionally, higher education qualifications positively impact overall health and reduce healthcare costs (Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022).

Fostering youth identity

Furthermore, higher education provides refugee youth with the critical thinking and life skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to build a strong sense of self-worth, agency, and **positive identity development** (Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022). Education encourages young refugees to think critically about their circumstances and the broader social issues affecting their lives, fostering a nuanced understanding of their identities and roles within society (Turner et al., 2019). Participation in higher education programmes allows refugee students to defy stereotypes and reshape their identities within their communities and the broader host society (Berg, 2023). These skills enable youth to navigate complex social environments, understand and exercise their rights, and pursue opportunities for personal and professional growth. Research specific to Jordan shows higher education builds agency among youth so that they can have a level of control over their development and choices (Elshami, 2024).

"The opportunity of education provides refugees with the ability to think about the future. Unlike a focus on survival, which generally reduces people to passive recipients and does not recognise the human thirst for knowledge acquisition that enables one to think about the future and to plan and strategise for one's family, experiences with higher education allow for a shift in thinking toward considerations of the possible and potential." (Dryden-Peterson, 2010)

Advancing gender equity

Higher education is a powerful **tool for promoting gender equity** and empowering refugee women. It provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue personal and professional goals and

participate actively in the labour market. Evidence shows that awareness of higher education opportunities improves secondary education retention rates, with stronger effects for female students and in refugee camp settings (UNHCR, 2022).

The **economic benefits** of educating women are substantial. Globally, women with a secondary school education may earn twice as much as those with no formal education, and women with a tertiary education make three times as much (UNHCR, 2023a). In Jordan, women with higher education are more likely to be employed in professional and technical roles, enhancing economic independence and reducing gender disparities. For Syrian refugee women, higher education quite clearly implies higher labour force participation (Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022; Tiltne et al., 2019)

Access to higher education plays a crucial role in **reducing gender-based violence**, early marriage, and teenage pregnancy. Education equips women to make informed decisions about their lives, thereby reducing vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. (Turner et al., 2019; UNHCR, 2022). Furthermore, educated women are better informed about health practices and have greater access to healthcare services, leading to better health outcomes for themselves and their families (Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022).

“[Higher education has] significant benefits for girls and women, including higher earnings, improved standards of living, reduced early childbearing and number of children, planned fertility, improved health, nutrition, and wellbeing, improved agency and decision-making, and enhanced social capital. [...] Higher education is also significant for gender equality and empowering girls and women to become role models and contribute to peacebuilding and reconstruction.” (Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022)

Educated women are powerful **agents of change** in their communities. They advocate for gender equality and drive social and economic development (ARDD, 2016; Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022). In Jordan, female graduates from higher education programmes often take on leadership roles, contributing to peacebuilding and community development efforts (Tiltne et al., 2019).

Social integration and community inclusion

Higher education is crucial for **reducing social tensions and increasing social integration** of refugees, providing a platform for building relationships with host community members and fostering mutual understanding (Berg, 2023; Hajisoteriou, 2023). A study in Jordan revealed that 83% of Syrian students in higher education interact continuously with their Jordanian counterparts, and 47% reported that most of their friends are a mix of Syrian and Jordanian students, breaking down social barriers and promoting a sense of belonging (Steivi et al., 2018).

“Refugees who participate in higher education may more easily integrate into host communities and economies.” (Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022)

Higher education enhances individual capabilities and encourages **civic and community engagement** among refugees. Programmes like the DAFI scholarship incorporate elements of community service. In 2019, 39% of the DAFI student body worldwide engaged in volunteer work, fostering social cohesion (Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022). In Jordan, similar initiatives provide refugees with

opportunities to give back to the community and repay the support they received in their host countries (Berg, 2023). These programmes counteract social exclusion and marginalisation, empowering young people to become drivers of positive change in their communities and host societies (United Nations in Jordan, 2022).

“Academia, like freedom, is indivisible. It is enriched by diversity, and so long as some are excluded, all are restricted.” (Berg, 2023)

Durable solutions

Higher education is a critical **enabler of durable solutions** for refugees, a core mandate for UNHCR. The benefits of education for refugee youth are well documented, whether they remain in protracted displacement, return to their country of origin, or resettle in third countries. (ARDD, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Turner et al., 2019). Educated young people are an important resource as leaders of the future in their home countries and abroad (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2012).

Higher education plays a vital role in supporting the **voluntary return and reconstruction** efforts in post-conflict countries. Studies show a direct correlation between higher levels of education and adaptation and the willingness of refugees to return to their countries of origin (Elshami, 2024). Refugees who have acquired higher education bring back essential skills and knowledge that are crucial for addressing the manifold challenges of post-conflict recovery, including governance, healthcare, education, and economic development (ARDD, 2016). One DAFI study shows that refugees who had access to higher education found it more viable to move back home post-conflict and did so early in the repatriation process (Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Hollow et al., 2016). Scholarship programmes, like the DAFI, aim to provide refugees with the qualifications needed to engage in the reconstruction of Syria. A study specific to Jordan shows that the needs of post-war Syria are similar to the needs of the current Jordanian job market. Hence, a Syrian graduate from a Jordanian university is going to be needed in post-war Syria (El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017).

“[H]igher education is a tool of reconstruction, developing the human and social capital necessary for future reconstruction and economic development in countries of origin.” (Hollow et al., 2016)

4. COSTS OF INACTION

Economic implications

The economic cost of failing to invest in tertiary education for refugees in Jordan is substantial, affecting both refugees and the host community. Refugees without access to tertiary education are less likely to find stable, well-paying jobs, exacerbating poverty and economic inequality (EDU-SYRIA, 2021; European Commission, 2018). This situation creates a cycle of poverty and **dependency on social welfare and humanitarian aid** which is costly for refugees, donors, and host communities (Turner et al., 2019). Youth unemployment in particular has lasting adverse effects, including higher risks of joblessness, poor-quality work, and lower incomes.

“The relief model disregards the central argument that providing higher education – though costly and difficult – is cheaper and less cumbersome than creating long-term dependents who rely on government and international support” (Elshami, 2024)

Protection against vulnerabilities

In Jordan, similar to other contexts of mass displacement, higher education serves as a **mechanism for protection** in refugee contexts (ARDD, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022). In turn, the cost of not accessing higher education translates to increased vulnerabilities (MOPIC, 2019b).

Education, particularly higher education, is a powerful tool for protecting young women and girls from **gender-based violence**, as has been previously described in Section 3. Furthermore, data shows that higher education for refugees safeguards against potential **recruitment into armed groups**, a significant risk for youth in conflict zones. (El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017; Elshami, 2024; Hollow et al., 2016). Access to higher education also serves as a protection mechanism against **irregular migration**. Many refugee youth, driven by the lack of educational and employment opportunities in their host countries, consider migrating irregularly to seek better prospects. This often exposes them to significant risks, including exploitation, human trafficking, and even death during dangerous journeys. By providing viable educational pathways, Jordan can offer refugee youth alternatives to irregular migration, protecting them from these dangers (ARDD, 2016; Turner et al., 2019).

“While it has been long accepted that education in all its forms is an instrument of protection in refugee or crisis contexts, higher education makes a significant contribution to the protection of older youth [... higher education] can mitigate the risk of young people being drawn into identification with violent or sectarian ideologies.” (Hollow et al., 2016)

National, regional, and global security

The lack of access to higher education for refugees in Jordan poses significant risks to **national stability**. Without educational opportunities, refugees face prolonged unemployment and poverty, which can lead to social unrest and heightened security concerns (ARDD, 2016; Turner et al., 2019; UNHCR, 2023b). Educated refugees are less likely to depend on social welfare systems and more likely to participate in the labour market, further enhancing economic stability and reducing social tensions.

“Higher education serves a dual purpose for the refugee community: it is both a tool for sustainable development and a component of immediate security and stability.” (ARDD, 2016)

At a **regional level**, refugee education is crucial for maintaining stability and preventing conflict spread. Educated refugees can rebuild their home countries upon return, aiding post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts. Neglecting the educational needs of refugee youth risks creating a lost generation of potential leaders (ARDD, 2016).

As previously mentioned, the lack of higher education opportunities in host countries like Jordan drives

many refugees to **migrate irregularly**. Providing educational opportunities in current locations reduces the need for such perilous journeys (ARDD, 2016; Turner et al., 2019; UNHCR, 2023a). A report by the Norwegian Refugee Council indicated that 50% of refugees surveyed in Jordan would leave the country due to the lack of opportunities and insufficient assistance, directly linking educational access to stability (NRC, 2016).

“Voices in the European Union see this as a security threat as refugees continue to arrive at Europe’s doors. The larger threat is the consistent and ongoing un-education of mass populations of youth that will have profound and manifold consequences into the future.” (ARDD, 2016)

Refugee education has far-reaching implications for **global stability and security**. Higher education serves as a tool for peacebuilding by promoting tolerance, critical thinking, and social cohesion. Educated individuals are less likely to adopt extremist ideologies and more likely to advocate for peace and development in their communities (Berg, 2023; El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017; Elshami, 2024; Turner et al., 2019). This is particularly important in Jordan, where the risk of recruitment into militant groups is significant. Providing access to higher education can buffer youth against these dangers and promote a culture of peace and stability (Berg, 2023; El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017; Elshami, 2024; Turner et al., 2019).

5. LESSONS LEARNED

Address barriers

To reduce dropout rates and increase retention, it is essential to **address barriers** preventing refugee students from accessing higher education. These barriers include financial constraints, lack of information, and limited availability of programmes (ARDD, 2016; Atesok et al., 2019; Durable Solutions Platform, 2022; Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022). Programmes offering scholarships, financial aid, and mentorship can significantly enhance access to higher education. Raising awareness, offering guidance on available opportunities, and creating pathways linking different educational levels can help students navigate their journey more effectively (ARDD, 2016; Berg, 2023; UNHCR, 2023b).

Increase Investment

Investing in higher education supports durable solutions, facilitating local integration, repatriation, and reconstruction efforts. It enhances human and social capital, driving sustainable development and long-term prosperity (ARDD, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Turner et al., 2019). The evidence highlights that substantive investment is urgently needed to fully grasp how refugee participation in higher education affects the economic and social development of host countries. Comprehensive research on the return on investment in higher education for refugees is vital to highlight incentives, overcome resistance, and drive funding towards inclusive higher education initiatives (UNHCR, 2023a). The literature on the impact of higher education opportunities for refugees in Jordan has not kept pace with the expanding landscape and global evidence, and expanded research is crucial to provide an evidence base for increased donor engagement. (ARDD, 2016; El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017, Turner et al., 2019).

6. CONCLUSION

Higher education for refugees in Jordan provides a myriad of benefits from improved economic and professional outcomes, to mental health and well-being, to community development. is crucial for community development, fostering relationships, sustainable growth, and reducing dependence on international aid. Investing in tertiary education for refugees also benefits host countries with a strengthened workforce, less dependency on aid, and increased peace and stability. Conversely, neglecting tertiary education for refugees leads to increased social unrest, and cycles of poverty and dependency.

While global evidence is expanding, literature on the situation in Jordan is lagging. Increased support for rigorous research is critical to provide an evidence base to incentivise future donor engagement (ARDD, 2016; El-Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017; Turner et al., 2019). Therefore, a strong commitment from the international funding community is essential. Investing in higher education for refugees is both a moral and strategic necessity for a stable, prosperous future for refugees and host communities and sustainable funding will be crucial to turn theoretical solutions into practical realities (ARDD, 2016).

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