



13.04.2016 - Among the millions of people displaced by the war in Syria are more than 100,000 university students, now facing the risk of becoming a "lost generation" with no prospects of finishing their studies and contributing to their country's recovery. In the humanitarian crises resulting from the 37 ongoing conflicts around the globe, only 1% of young refugees has access to higher education.

On 1 May, Jorge Sampaio, 2015 UN Mandela Prize and former UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, is launching a "Call for Action, Connect and Act" to bolster Higher Education in Emergencies, including the establishment of a Rapid Response Mechanism at global level.

Mr. Sampaio quoted UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon when he presented the project at a High-level event to launch the report for the [World Humanitarian Summit](#) (23-24 May in Turkey) which took place at UN Headquarters on 4 March: "We must ensure no-one in conflict, no-one in chronic poverty and no-one living with the risk of natural hazards and rising sea levels is left behind."

The 2030 Agenda and the UN Summit on Movement of People

"Education is the most powerful driver for change. It enables individuals to transform their lives and empowers communities. Without education there is no progress, and I fear, our sense of humanity is harmed," said Mr. Sampaio.

"Higher education can help shelter and prepare this important population-group of young men and young women to become the next generations of leaders," said Mr. Sampaio recalling that

the new 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals commit "to providing inclusive and equitable education at all levels – early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational training." [Goal 4](#) – to ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all - is to be achieved in the next 15 years.

Mr. Sampaio will present the project at the [High-Level Summit on Managing Large-scale Movements of Migrants and Refugees](#) at the 71st UN General Assembly, on 19 September 2016.

What is a Rapid Response Mechanism?

Higher education is a largely autonomous system in most countries. Therefore a platform for enhanced cooperation and coordination is needed, based on existing inter-agency forums and other working groups, to match students in need with the available opportunities in universities all around the world. For that purpose, an Academic Consortium and a Network of Partners would integrate the mechanism.

The objectives of providing Higher Education in emergencies are:

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to encourage the development of qualified human resources for the future reconstruction of refugees home countries after repatriation

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to achieve self-reliance and trust (inter-personal and on institutions)

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to facilitate integration, temporary or permanent, and contribute skills to the host country pending a durable solution of repatriation

to serve as a role model for other refugees/students to further their education

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to improve women's skills and empowerment

Mr. Sampaio's concluding remarks at the event were a call to member states "to join efforts and work together to make the immediate progress in unleashing the power of higher education to build resilience in emergencies and foster recovery and rebuilding from disaster and conflict."

UNRICs Related Links

- [Global Platform for Syrian Students](#)
- [World Humanitarian Summit](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Photo: UN Photo. *South Sudanese Students Sit for School Exams*