

PLACE

Dakar, Senegal

DATE

1st April 2022

UNHCR and partners commit to expand innovative higher education for young refugees in the region

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, alongside the [Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium](#), hosted a roundtable discussion on increasing access to higher education for refugees in West and Central Africa (WCA) through connected learning. The roundtable was held on 29 and 30 March in Dakar and focused on Chad, Niger and Cameroon. It included participants from ministries of education and local universities from the three countries.

The meeting resulted in a commitment to expand access to higher education opportunities for young refugees, that are innovative and linked to existing needs in the labour market. A joint roadmap for the next three years was developed by each country delegation to translate these commitments into concrete actions.

The current enrolment rate of refugees in tertiary education in the WCA region stands at just 1.2 per cent, which is well below the regional access rate for non-refugees, which averages 10 per cent, and the global access rate for refugees which averages 5 per cent. Refugees face many challenges in accessing tertiary education, and access to quality and certified connected learning programmes presents an opportunity to overcome some of these challenges.

For Xavier Creach, Head of Protection at UNHCR Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa, refugees need opportunities to start their lives again, to become self-reliant and to regain their dignity. “*Connected learning presents a unique opportunity to provide young refugees with access to quality higher education courses,*” he said at the opening of the roundtable. [Connected Higher Education](#) can widen participation to tertiary education for refugees while allowing access to content and resources that enable students to connect in the modern world.

Various education partners attended the roundtable including the representatives of the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* (AUF), who started to support refugees access to connected higher education degrees in 2021, and members of the Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium, including Arizona State University and the University of Geneva.

“AUF and UNHCR collaborate on several innovative projects aimed at improving refugees access to higher education but also employability in West & Central Africa, initiatives by which AUF and UNHCR aim at renewing university, training and professional prospects offered to the young refugees in the region,” said Ouidad Tebbaa, AUF’s Director for West Africa.

About UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency

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UNHCR is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people. UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of people who have been forced to flee. UNHCR and partners are committed to achieving enrolment of 15 per cent of young refugee women and men in tertiary education by the year 2030 – the **15by30 target**, up from a current global enrolment rate of 5 per cent. Tertiary education is indeed a critical link between learning and earning, allowing young refugees to thrive and transition to the pursuit of sustainable futures. For more information, please visit: www.unhcr.org.

About Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium

The [Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium](https://connectedlearning4refugees.org/) (CLCC) is a consortium co-led by UNHCR and Arizona State University, which coordinates efforts in post-secondary connected learning for refugees. The CLCC aims to promote, coordinate, collaborate and/or support the provision of quality higher education in contexts of conflict, crisis and displacement through connected learning by sharing and disseminating knowledge, experience and evidence; developing innovative and good practice; and ensuring accountability to students and their communities in order to foster self-reliance. For more information, please visit: <https://connectedlearning4refugees.org/>

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