IMMIGRATION
CONSULTATION
SUBMISSION
AUGUST 2016
OVER THE PAST YEAR, THERE HAS BEEN
UNPRECEDENTED ATTENTION
TOWARD THE GLOBAL
DISPLACEMENT CRISSES
THAT NOW AFFECTS MORE THAN 65 MILLION PEOPLE.

As the number of refugees around the world reaches an all-time high, Canada’s immigration strategy must adapt to better respond to this incredible need. Indeed, we are at a pivotal moment where the actions of Canada and other countries, in response to this crisis, will shape the global future. In this context, Canada has an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate global leadership; build upon the national refugee commitments and public momentum of the recent months; and mobilize further public support to continue to create a more inclusive and diverse Canadian society.

World University Service of Canada (WUSC) welcomes the review of Canada’s immigration strategy and these consultations as an important step toward achieving these goals.

WUSC’s input is informed by our work with the Canadian government, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) to resettle young refugee students through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP). It is also informed by our close collaboration with WUSC’s unique network of Canadian post-secondary institutions who support our Student Refugee Program (SRP). WUSC’s input also draws from our experiences working alongside many refugee youth around the world and our vast network of students, who play a critical role implementing the SRP on over 75 campuses across the country.

WUSC’s input provides specific recommendations for Canada’s refugee strategy, as an important component of our broader national immigration strategy. Our input places a whole-of-Canada approach at the centre of Canada’s strategy to respond to the global displacement crisis, recognizing that successful refugee resettlement necessitates the involvement of all Canadians. Our input highlights the role of the Government of Canada, individual Canadians, the private sector, and post-secondary education institutions, working through a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach. Only in doing so will Canada, in conjunction with other countries, be able to respond at the scale and over the timeframe needed to effectively address this global crisis.

Our submission is comprised of three parts:

1. Higher level comments on the overall direction and focus of Canada’s strategy for responding to the global displacement crisis, and the means through which this could best be implemented;

2. An annex of initial findings from our recent high-level roundtable on the Canadian post-secondary response to the Syrian refugee crisis; and

3. An overview of the social media activities that our youth network have been engaging in this year to mobilize further support for the education and resettlement of refugees, reflecting our shared understanding about the importance of meaningful and sustained public engagement.

Our overall comments expand upon the following recommendations for Canada’s strategy for responding to the global displacement crisis:

1. Put the private sponsorship of refugees at the heart of Canada’s response, prioritizing the engagement of the Canadian public.

2. Mobilize the Canadian private sector to invest in refugee resettlement and integration efforts.

3. Make education a key component at the forefront of the Canadian response.

4. Apply a multi-departmental approach to Canada’s response.

5. Ensure that refugee resettlement remains inclusive and diverse.

6. Continue to promote and share Canada’s expertise internationally.
WHO
WE ARE

WUSC (World University Service of Canada) is a uniquely Canadian organization, a long-standing development and immigration partner of the Government of Canada, and a leading practitioner of refugee education and resettlement; scholarships for development; education reform; skills-for-employment programming; inclusive market system development; private sector partnerships; volunteering for development; and youth engagement and empowerment. WUSC seeks to create a world in which all young people can grow up in safe, secure, and supportive environments, and where they can learn, work, and play a vital role in their country’s development.

WUSC has been supporting the education of forcibly displaced youth since the early 1930s, when a group of students and faculty members at the University of Toronto mobilized to support displaced students living in Europe. WUSC was one of the first Sponsorship Agreement Holders to participate in Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP) in 1978, and were the only one to focus on providing opportunities for refugee youth to continue their studies in Canada. With funding from the UK government, the US State Department, 60 Million Girls Foundation, and private donations, WUSC has also been working in refugee camps in Kenya to improve access to quality education for refugee youth, particularly young girls.

Through our Student Refugee Program (SRP), nearly one million students at over 75 post-secondary institutions across Canada assist in the funding, resettlement, and integration of refugee youth from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. More than 1,000 of these students are active members of campus-based WUSC Local Committees that provide additional, targeted support to SRP students for at least their first year in Canada, helping them navigate the Canadian post-secondary system, connecting them to relevant community services, and providing critical social networks and support.

Today, through our Student Refugee Program (SRP), nearly one million students at over 75 post-secondary institutions across Canada assist in the funding, resettlement, and integration of refugee youth from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. WUSC’s unique youth-to-youth model, engagement with diverse Canadian post-secondary institutions, and demonstrated success have garnered international attention for the SRP from the highest levels of the United Nations. In recent months, we have also received strong interest from countries that are exploring the PSRP and/or provision of educational pathways for refugees, including the United States, Japan, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and the UK.

Since 1978, WUSC’s network has sponsored over 1,600 young refugees to build a brighter future in Canada through post secondary education and subsequent employment. In doing so, these young refugees have made important contributions to Canada’s economy and social institutions, and to the rebuilding of their countries of origin.
OUR RESPONSE

WUSC applauds the Government of Canada for its significant response to the Syrian refugee crisis, with the successful resettlement of more than 25,000 refugees in recent months, and the commitment to resettle an additional 17,000 refugees by the end of 2016.

We also applaud Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada’s (IRCC) efforts to promote a positive narrative on refugee resettlement, which has fostered welcoming communities across the country, and rejuvenated support and engagement among the broader Canadian public for refugee resettlement.

We are pleased that this effort has been recognized around the world, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, stating that “the world needs more Canada.” Grandi was referring to the Canadian model of immigration policy that highlights public support, emphasizes rapid response, provides educational pathways, and promotes an inclusive and pluralist response that facilitates effective integration. We believe that Canadians are proud of their involvement in these resettlement efforts, and of this international recognition.

We acknowledge the risks of unsuccessful refugee resettlement and integration, but know that for more than four decades Canada has demonstrated that we know how to do it right.

We see the desire of many countries to collaborate on a response to the global displacement crisis, but know that these and other countries are uncertain about how to press ahead.

In this context, we firmly believe that the world needs Canada’s leadership, renewing and increasing our refugee resettlement commitments; promoting and sharing Canadian models and best practices; and using both to influence and leverage additional international action. It is in this context that WUSC offers the following recommendations:

1. **Put the private sponsorship of refugees at the heart of Canada’s response, prioritizing the engagement of the Canadian public**

Since the PSRP was established in 1978 to scale-up the protection of Vietnamese refugees, engaging Canadians has been a cornerstone of Canada’s strategy for responding to the global displacement of vulnerable people. This has generated greater public support for refugee resettlement and immigration, created more welcoming communities, strengthened the bonds between Canadians and newcomers, and fostered an inclusive sense of citizenship. Indeed, private sponsorship is a proven means to facilitate access to education and employment, and ensure greater social integration.

This past year has demonstrated the eagerness of Canadians to continue to be a part of Canada’s refugee protection efforts, and strengthened the recognition that refugee resettlement and integration is a shared government-public responsibility. IRCC has a unique opportunity to build upon these successes and continue to increase opportunities for the public to participate in resettlement and integration efforts. Innovative models such as the Blended Visa Office Referred
WUSC’s Immigration Consultation Submission

The WUSC’s Immigration Consultation Submission (BVOR) Program have proven that collaboration between government, civil society, and other key actors can be an effective way to magnify impact and share responsibility.

WUSC recommends that the Government expand its support for the PSRP, as part of a plan to increase the number of refugees resettled to Canada annually. An expanded PSRP should equip more Canadians with the resources needed to participate in refugee resettlement; experiment with blended resettlement programs; invest in innovative PSRP initiatives; and support more effective monitoring and evaluation, documentation, and knowledge-sharing by Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) - in collaboration with Canadian post-secondary institutions who can help build a strong evidence base that enhances our understanding of what does and does not work in refugee resettlement and integration.

The Government of Canada should also consider how other immigration priorities can be met through an enhanced PSRP and related humanitarian pathways. WUSC’s experience demonstrates that successful refugee resettlement can bring the same level of ambition and skills to Canada as other economic immigration programs.

2. Mobilize the Canadian private sector to invest in refugee resettlement and integration efforts

In recent months, the Canadian private sector has demonstrated an interest in supporting and funding resettlement and integration initiatives. Companies such as CN, Manulife, and GMC have committed or indicated a capacity to provide refugees with skills training, internships and other related employment-focused support. Some companies have set-up dedicated initiatives that engage their employees in “impact days”, through which employees volunteer their time and energy to provide employment preparation and job-seeking support to refugees.

However, these private sector efforts have thus far been relatively small in scale, underleveraged, and uncoordinated. We encourage the Government to play a stronger role in nurturing, coordinating, and scaling up this effort. This could include a greater public challenge to Canada’s private sector, in conjunction with efforts to promote the expansion of successful employment-related initiatives, such as IRCC’s Federal Internship for Newcomers (FIN) program, and those developed in recent months by the Canadian private sector. In this work, the Government should consider partnering with the Canadian Council of Chief Executives.

3. Make education a key component at the forefront of the Canadian response

Education is key to building a brighter future for refugees. In refugee camps, where employment opportunities are rare, education can reignite a young person’s vision for a better future, and better prepare them for eventual voluntary repatriation or resettlement. Yet refugee youth have very limited access to education, particularly at a post-secondary level, with less than 1% of refugees able to access higher education.

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We note that while education constitutes the most important and portable asset that refugees can possess, the global investment in refugee education overseas – in urban contexts and refugee camps – has not been commensurate with the increase in refugee and displaced populations. The underinvestment in refugee education further marginalizes some of the world’s most at-risk people in ways that foster instability in already fragile contexts, undermines resettlement and return efforts, and allows for the creation of future lost generations of youth. In this context, girls and young women are particularly vulnerable and prone to being left behind.

As well, in Canada and other countries, public support for refugee resettlement is dependent upon “getting immigration right”. This starts with successful integration for which education can play a critical role. When resettlement is combined with access to further education,
the speed and success of integration efforts are greatly enhanced. Moreover, investments in refugee education today will help grow Canada’s economy tomorrow.

We recommend that the Government place a greater emphasis on education in both its efforts to respond to the global displacement crisis and to successfully resettle more refugees in Canada. We recommend that the Government leverage the world-class expertise and capacities in its universities, colleges, and civil society organizations to strengthen education systems overseas, and increase and improve access to quality education for refugee youth. In Canada, we recommend that the Government engage more directly with the Canadian post-secondary community to increase the number of spaces available for refugee youth and new Canadians, and increase support for their efforts to provide scholarships, language-training programs, bridging programs, and related skills-development programs that create pathways to employment (please see annex one, which summarizes a recent roundtable that WUSC hosted on the Canadian post-secondary community’s response to the Syrian refugee crisis).

4. **Apply a multi-departmental approach to Canada’s response**

Resettlement alone is not able to reverse the global trends in displacement. Greater coordination between enhanced international development, resettlement, peacekeeping, and political interventions are needed to minimize the number of new people forced to flee and to maximize the chances of others to return home or find alternative durable solutions. By better aligning their responses, Government of Canada departments could ensure a more holistic approach to addressing global displacement - and to working with the global community on these issues.

In particular, IRCC has unique experiences and perspectives that could assist Global Affairs Canada in responding to humanitarian crises and in providing greater assistance to refugee populations and host communities around the world. By sharing best practices in integration and skills development, together IRCC and Global Affairs Canada could enable refugees to make positive contributions in their country of asylum, country of origin upon return, or country of resettlement, including Canada. The upcoming globalsummits on refugees and displacement present a unique opportunity for IRCC and Global Affairs Canada to work together on the international stage to truly demonstrate holistic Canadian leadership on the global displacement crisis.

5. **Ensure that refugee resettlement remains inclusive and diverse**

The Syrian refugee crisis resulted in a tremendous response by Canada. At the same time, these efforts must not come at the cost of our continued support to protracted refugee populations in other regions.

**We strongly urge the Government to ensure that Canada’s strategy for responding to the global displacement crisis is inclusive and not focused exclusively or primarily on any one region, nationality, ethnicity, or religion.**

We strongly urge the Government to ensure that Canada’s strategy for responding to the global displacement crisis is inclusive and not focused exclusively or primarily on any one region, nationality, ethnicity, or religion. We encourage the Government to continue to address protracted crises, while also responding to immediate and pressing humanitarian situations. We also ask the Government to ensure that there is a balance between those individuals in greatest need of immediate protection, and those who are equally in need of a durable solution.

In this context, we would highlight the fragility of Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya, which the Kenyan government has announced it will soon close. We would urge the Government of Canada to use all of its tools of engagement (development, diplomacy, resettlement) to ensure that this resettlement is voluntary, peaceful, well-planned, and coordinated, so that it fosters greater stability within the region.
6. **Continue to promote and share Canada’s expertise internationally**

In recent months, many of Canada’s immigration initiatives and processes have been recognized as models for other countries to emulate. We have shown leadership on the number of individuals who we have been able to successfully resettle; on our capacity to deliver a rapid response and our ability to respond directly to the Syrian refugee crisis; on fostering public engagement and support through our PSRP and BVOR and in creating welcoming communities through which integration is made possible; on engaging the private and public sector to mobilize additional resources and support; and on programs that create life-changing educational pathways while providing durable solutions to refugee youth.

These are traits and initiatives of which we should not only be extremely proud, but for which we should allocate resources to support other countries to implement and adapt to their unique country contexts. Canada is well-placed to provide guidance on implementing successful models for resettlement and integration. Such guidance would produce a substantial ripple effect around the world - enabling other countries to increase the number of refugees they resettle in a responsible and effective way.

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**FINAL THOUGHTS**

Over the past year, the number of people displaced around the world grew by nearly six million, with an estimated 12.4 million newly displaced. The rate of new displacements and their increasingly protracted nature will only see this number continue to rise. The time is indeed now to demonstrate Canada’s remarkable capacity to lead the global effort toward addressing the current displacement crisis. It is time for Canada to once again be recognized globally as the leader it is.
INITIAL FINDINGS FROM THE ROUNDTABLE
ON THE CANADIAN POST-SECONDARY COMMUNITY’S RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

On June 7, 2016, WUSC (World University Service of Canada) convened members of the Canadian post-secondary community for a roundtable to discuss their role in providing support to Syrian refugees and other displaced populations around the world. Participants included university, college, and CEGEP presidents, professors, and students; representatives from UNHCR, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and Global Affairs Canada; The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials; Canadian non-profit organizations; and Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada.

The concept of a roundtable arose out of the very strong outpouring of support for refugees from Canada’s post-secondary institutions, their faculty members, staff, students, and alumni. This response builds upon decades of work by the Canadian post-secondary community, including through the sponsorship of Syrian and other refugees under WUSC’s Student Refugee Program (SRP). Since 1978, the SRP has supported more than 1,500 refugee youth to resettle in Canada and continue their post-secondary education. Between September 2015 and January 2016, students and their institutions across the country committed to doubling the number of refugee youth sponsored through the program by placing more than 160 refugee students (80 originally from Syria) at Canadian universities, colleges, and CEGEPs in 2016-17.

The objectives of this half-day meeting were to: (1) take stock on the post-secondary response to date; (2) discuss challenges and share best practices among the various stakeholders; (3) identify opportunities for greater collaboration and scale; and (4) look toward a more holistic and unified response for the future.
RESPONSE FROM THE POST-SECONDARY COMMUNITY

The examples of current solutions presented by participants at the event were diverse and aimed to tackle the full spectrum of needs of people recently resettled in Canada and refugee youth around the world. These included:

▶ Scholarships for refugees and recently resettled youth;
▶ Sponsorship and resettlement for young refugees and refugee families;
▶ New academic programming that trains students to better meet the needs of immigrant and refugee populations;
▶ Pathways to education and employment, including language and skills training, and career counselling;
▶ Psycho-social support for individuals and families recently resettled in Canada;
▶ Education solutions within countries of asylum, including at the tertiary level and targeted support for young refugee girls; and
▶ Strengthening and sharing the evidence-base through research on refugee populations and related subjects.

LOOKING AHEAD

Participants agreed that there remains much more that can and must be done by the post-secondary community. Initial recommendations included:

▶ Increase educational opportunities for refugees and provide more resettlement places for refugee youth.
▶ Invest in refugee education, in Canada and overseas, along the whole lifecycle from early childhood to tertiary, including by government, institutions, community groups, and the private sector as future employers.
▶ Assume Canadian leadership on the global stage, particularly by sharing our unique Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, including the Student Refugee Program, as a durable solution for refugees and by increasing our focus on expanding education opportunities of youth in refugee camps.
▶ Ensure inclusivity of programs to provide support to all refugees, regardless of country of origin.
▶ Ensure information on pathways to education and employment, including prior learning assessment and credential recognition, are more accessible to refugees.
▶ Continue to build the capacity of Canadian post-secondary institutions to respond to the global refugee crisis, through training and the sharing of best practices.
▶ Foster further innovation and partnership to coordinate efforts and reach scale.
ANNEX B - THE VOICES OF CANADIAN YOUTH

Over the past year, through various social media campaigns and in-person events, we asked our dynamic youth network and post-secondary students from across the country to tell us why refugee resettlement is important to them. Here are some of the most frequent responses we received.

- ADDS DIVERSITY
- GROWS OUR ECONOMY
- STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES
- INCREASES GLOBAL AWARENESS
- FULFILLS GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY